

# THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

---

GAIUS GLENN ATKINS



BX 7233 .A8 G6 1917  
Atkins, Gaius Glenn, 1868-  
The Godward side of life





# THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE



SEP 20 1918

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

BY

GAIUS GLENN ATKINS, D.D.



THE PILGRIM PRESS

BOSTON

CHICAGO

COPYRIGHT 1917  
BY FRANK M. SHELDON

THE PILGRIM PRESS  
BOSTON



To  
My Father  
For Fifty Years a Minister  
of the Gospel



## FOREWORD

These sermons are offered to those who will read them in the hope that they may have a message for our time. They were all, with one exception — the sermon before the American Board — given to the people of two parishes — the First Church in Detroit or the Central Church in Providence — in the ordered course of our parish life and were meant for the people to whom they were preached and colored by the conditions under which they were given. So much the reader will discover for himself.

They gather around one central theme — the Godward Side of Life — and there is of necessity a good deal of repetition. All that has been left with little alteration. The theme itself is commanding enough to be much dwelt upon.

Most of them were given before we entered the war; one or two before the war began. If there are paragraphs which the duty of the hour seems to contradict they have been left in the author's hope and confidence that a happier future will bring them into a new perspective. They seem to him to be of the essence of the Kingdom of God.

Finally, no one is more conscious of how much these sermons leave to seek than the man who preached them.

THE MINISTER'S STUDY,

*The First Congregational Church in Detroit,  
October 2d, 1917.*



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I THE SUPREME SERVICE OF RELIGION	1
II THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD	15
III THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE	29
IV THE GREAT ADVENTURE	41
V THE MANIFOLD KINGSHIP OF JESUS	55
VI THE WINNING OF A SOUL	70
VII THE TIDES OF THE SPIRIT	83
VIII A GOOD CONSCIENCE	97
IX THE POOL AND THE CONDUIT	111
X THE CHALLENGE OF CHRISTIAN IDEALISM	126
XI CLOUDS WITHOUT WATER	139
XII THE UNNOTED LOSS OF GOD	152
XIII DOERS OF THE WORD	165
XIV WHERE ARE THE DEAD?	179



# THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

---

## I

### THE SUPREME SERVICE OF RELIGION

*“Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and for that he is strong in power, not one is lacking. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from Jehovah, and the justice due to me is passed away from my God? Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard? The everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength. even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.”—Isaiah 40: 26-31.*

This great passage is the marching song of a people facing a great task and needing therefore to be inspired greatly and heartened. It was evident to the clear-visioned singer that the exile was almost over. Israel was on the eve of her release. Their God had raised up Cyrus, who was breaking the empire of their masters as time has broken the clay tablets upon which the ancient lords of Mesopotamia wrote the stories of their terrible victories. The gates of Babylon were to be opened and the Jew, after seventy years, was to go out through those gates and seek the land of his fathers. There such a task awaited him as no people — and especially a people broken in spirit and wanting in courage — could easily face. A ruined city was to be re-built, low fallen walls set up anew, a temple whose glory was but a dim memory be made again beautiful.

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

Men setting out on such an errand as theirs needed great music by which to march. So God sent them a prophet singer. He sang over and over again the love and the goodness of God; and because he sang so splendidly, with so sure a passion, with so heartening a note, because his music has such faith and vision at the heart of it, men have marched to the joy of it ever since. The city which the returned exiles re-built has changed its masters again and again; its sanctuaries and its leaders are only a memory, but the marching song of a nameless prophet has been humanity's deathless music, and we kindle to it still as we seek the city of our desire.

I. This is the first great service of religion to life: it gives us a light to follow and music by which to march. We need a great faith in order to be fruitful even in the little things of life. Nothing less or other than religion can supply this faith, this inspiration. Israel could never have re-built Jerusalem without Nehemiah, but Israel would never have had the heart even to attempt that re-building without the prophet of the exile. They also serve us who sing to us the marching songs of faith and adoration. To this the ancient experiences of an exiled people bear their testimony, and to this every great and fruitful accomplishment of men since the morning of time bears testimony. Turn as you will the pages of history and tell me if you find any record of continents subdued, or civilizations established, or liberty enthroned, or conscience emancipated, or states made free, or battles nobly fought, or burdens long and patiently borne, or new and radiant departures given the souls of men, without great faith in God. Nay, search the secret places of your own lives; rehearse the story of what you have known and been and



## THE SUPREME SERVICE OF RELIGION

borne; seek out the roots of your patience, the hiding-place of your self-denial; find out for yourselves what has kept you unstained in the face of manifold temptations, or made it possible for you to see the bow of promise through your tears, and find if ever the nobler and better moments of your life have been wanting in a faith which led you like a star, or from persuasions which came to you as far-off music comes to men too weary, as they think, to go farther until they hear the strains which lift them from their dust.

Now, beyond such general considerations as these—the consideration, that is, that the greatest things in life are done in the light of life's greatest visions, that faith can never be sterile, that religion must help us in all our tasks and battles—beyond all this there are more definite considerations, and the prophet indicates them one by one in the verses with which this fortieth chapter ends. His first exhortation is strangely unexpected: "Lift up your eyes on high." Here is the first definite service of religion: it calls us to look away from all those things which too much oppress and blind us, to the higher sources of our strength and peace. We are too much given to looking down; it is not so much the burdens we bear as our earthward gaze which bows our shoulders and our souls alike—we look down for our duties, for our fellowships, for our pleasures. At best, we look abroad, but we find it so hard to look up. Our downward gaze gives cast and character to life and occupation. Salvation begins when we lift up our eyes on high.

It does not greatly matter, to begin with, where we look, or for what we look, if we will only lift up our eyes. The upward gaze has its own suggestion and will, if we will only follow its revelations home, lead us from

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

height to height until we are wholly possessed by the sense of the greatest and the best — nay, until we have found our resting place in God. There is a text whose finer suggestion we lose because we quote it for the most part from the Authorized Version: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help." No, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills," the Psalmist really said. "From whence cometh mine help?" Our help does not come from the hills; our help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth. But the hills are his altar-stairs, and if we lift up our eyes to their purple summits, their serenity and brooding strength will suggest to us a power and peace of which all the strength of all the hills is but the broken revelation. If we lift up our eyes to the hills they will carry us to the clouds; the clouds to the azure spaces of the skies; the azure spaces of the skies to the stars; the stars to serene immensities of changeless power, and serene immensities of changeless power will carry our reverent vision to the very presence of God.

There is something more here than either poetry or rhetoric. All vast and brooding things are the thresholds of the Infinite, the threshold of the places of the presence of God. We have only to let such imagination, emotions, revelations, far-flung flights of the soul, as are implicit in every upward look and searching vision, have their way. They will lead us, if we follow them, to the Divine. That, indeed, was exactly the thing which the prophet meant in his literal employment of this exhortation: "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and for that he is strong, not one is lacking." His fellow exiles are to consider the testimony

## THE SUPREME SERVICE OF RELIGION

of the stars, for the testimony of the stars is the testimony of the unchanging power, and the unclouded goodness of God. But they must lift up their eyes to begin with. Otherwise the stars have no messages for them and all the comfort of the most ancient heavens is in vain.

This, then, is the first thing which religion asks us to do: simply to look up. "Lift up your eyes from your ledgers and ask yourselves the meaning of your buying and selling. Try your gains by some other balance-sheet than figures and statistics; test your gains by character, social service, the happiness of little children, the strength of men, the stainlessness of womanhood. Seek the more enduring values, let them have their way with you. "Lift up your eyes" from your merchandise and ask yourself the meaning of buying and selling. Let all their finer suggestions lead you from level to level, test your enterprises, hallow your processes, give you new vision of cloth and bread, of iron and wool. If only a man will follow all the higher suggestions of any business in which he has any right to engage, let those suggestions have their way with him, seek to make all his business operations conform to ideals and imperatives which are implicit in every transaction, he will find that they have carried him into regions where business is a sacrament and where buying and selling is a part of the communion and commerce of the Kingdom of God.

"Lift up your eyes" from your looms and forges. Let them sing you the true songs of labor. Inquire into the meaning of their hoarse music. Seek to relate them on the one side to the men and women who stand before them, and on the other side to the men and women who are served by their output. Study the moral and

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

spiritual by-products of your business; you will find here also undreamt-of possibilities indwelling in the upward look. It is because we have seen the forge and the loom alone, unrelated to the wider needs of men, that too often their output has been weariness, despair, and social strife.

“Lift up your eyes” from your pleasures. Forget the joys which lie in the dust, the pleasures which belong to the lower and unworthy sides of life. Let lasting pleasure lead you to deepening happiness; deepening happiness to abiding joy; abiding joy to eternal blessings. These are stairs by which we climb; we shall never know what happiness is as long as all the vision which seeks happiness is directed earthward. Happiness, like every other gift, cometh down from above, the gift of “the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning.”

“Lift up your eyes” from life and its restlessness, its occupations, its doubts and its negations. Let the needs of your soul have the right of way. Be persuaded that nothing which is really necessary to the brave and fruitful conduct of life can ever be false or impossible. Test your logic by life, not life by logic. In every region we are shutting ourselves away from our real inheritances because we will not look beyond the thing which occupies our foregrounds. There may be a petty logic which finds no place or need of God, denies our freedom, reduces us to the level of the machine, affirms our pathetic helplessness in the face of circumstances and inheritance, and does not dare to claim the birthright of immortality. “Lift up your eyes” from any such conclusions as these. Life has its logic as the soul has its necessities. We will not interpret the great necessities of character in terms of limitations and rigidities which are the children of our

## THE SUPREME SERVICE OF RELIGION

doubts or our fears. Heredity and environment are the ministers of life, not its masters. The world is the time-worn, time-woven vesture of God, not a veil which conceals Him. Death itself is the gate of life and not the pathetic and all-consuming terminus of life.

“Lift up your eyes on high.” Religion is always calling men to look up. Her creeds, her forms of worship, her great affirmations, her unclouded revelations are every one of them a summons to the upward gaze. If only men would stop and begin to look up, God would in the end have His way with them. We cannot indeed keep our eyes toward the skies always; we should be stumbling and going blindly. But if the upward look yields the vision by which we guide ourselves, the revelation of amplitudes in which we strengthen and console ourselves, we shall turn again to all our tasks with new inspirations and build through our endeavor stairs which climb toward God.

II. The next service of religion is the correction of our hasty judgments. The prophet asks the people who have grown weary of waiting, who feared that God would never set them free, to be done with their doubts and their complaints. “Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from Jehovah, and the justice due to me is passed away from my God?” The Jews had been saying just that. Few among the living could even have remembered their fatherland. It lay like a dream along their horizon; their hope of release had been so long deferred. They were weary and sick of waiting. The prophet did not argue with them; he simply expostulated, and his expostulation is his song. “Lift up your eyes”; get the larger vision; try to get some sure sense of God’s processes; remember how short your days, how long His purposes; how small

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

your station, how vast the order over which He reigns and through which He operates; and then be done with your hasty judgments.

We need this correction of hasty judgments and unfounded fears and unjustified doubts as much as these ancient exiles. Life is always ingrowing. We narrow it to our interests and our own operations. We see only our foregrounds; then, because they are full sometimes of confusion and disaster, we cease believing in order, joy or victory. We pronounce ill-considered judgments upon life and the world, and are persuaded in the end that love can have no part in so seemingly unhappy a situation, and wisdom no power in directing processes so blind, so inconsiderate. Then the great affirmations of religion come into action. They begin by stripping us bare of our egotism; they teach us that we are not the centres of even our own world. The sun does not rise and set within the boundaries of our own fields. It does us good to have our dimensions thus shrunk; there is a great healing in the sense of our own littlenesses. The darkest shadow which falls across our world is after all the shadow of ourselves. If we become properly small our shadow shrinks in measure; if we cast all our care upon Him we are highly exalted, and then we stand as men stand upon the uplands, with amplitudes of light everywhere about us, our own shadow narrowed to a point at our feet and our vision lifted to far-off heartening horizons which no shadow of ourselves can ever darken and where the light of God forever dwells.

But religion does a great deal more than duly to diminish us in our own eyes and give us instead the persuasion of an infinite Wisdom reaching through uncounted operations to divine consummations. Religion



## THE SUPREME SERVICE OF RELIGION

assures us of the meaning of our lives to God. We are not lost in a world so great, or forgotten in operations so vast. We need to turn to the New Testament for the full assurance of this. The Master tells us that not even a sparrow falleth to the ground unnoted; wherefore so much more are we in our Father's care. Faith counsels patience and patience waits upon the revelation of the love of God in life. There are some things we can never understand until we have lived them through, and only as we have lived them through in great faith that God is loving and good. He is sending us to school, there is a meaning even in our disappointment and our exile. We are not forgotten simply because the thing we want is not immediately given to us. Time and time again some better thing is given to us and through waiting itself we are made strong. The long-continued exile of which the Jew complained was really the making of him. We should never have had the fortieth chapter of Isaiah had the exile ended before it had done its perfect work. In such fires of hope adjourned and weary waiting the last taint of idolatry was burned away. What Isaiah and Amos and Micah could never teach a people who would not heed and were always forgetting, the exile itself taught in a never-to-be-forgotten way. When Israel went home again he took with him from the plains of Mesopotamia a purified faith which crowned all the long beginnings of his national life; a sense of God never again to be clouded or lost. No, God does not forget nor does His justice fail.

It is true that we need a clear vision to follow His ways. Our conventional tests of His justice are often sadly deficient. He does not adjudicate life in terms of honor and wealth and ease and lesser well-being. He

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

deals with life in terms of life — character is the last unfailing record of the justice and the love of God and here His judgments are true and righteous altogether. Never a tear falls in love and faith which does not water some holy growth of tenderness. Strength is the wages of burdens bravely borne, and a great spiritual wealth, unfailing and unperishable, ripens like fruit upon a life established in confidence and obedience — aye, and in searching and relentless ways God's justice has its way with men. When all the lesser laws which rule the universe have failed, the laws which rule the soul will reign in undiminished authority and the great assize itself will be but the revelation of all the ways in which the soul, true or false to God, has ripened in beauty or withered, seared by its sins.

III. The third great service of religion — as the prophet sings his heart out — is its power of suggestion and interpretation. Religion does not prove God; religion discovers Him. He is not beyond proof; at least He is not beyond the demonstration of cumulative conclusions more certain than any proof. But they do not belong to the province of religion. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard?" "Here," says the prophet, "is something which you ought to know. It is part of the commonplace of life, a great light which you ought to see, a great comfort which you ought to desire." These mighty moving verses are meant to recall men to God by suggesting His glory and His power everywhere resident and everywhere evident. We are asked to consider the majesty and the power of the heavenly host, the shining garmenture of the sea and the serene majesty of the hills, and every one of these things is to be to us the sacramental suggestion of a God who measures the waters and metes out the heavens



## THE SUPREME SERVICE OF RELIGION

and weighs the mountains and brings out the host of the stars by number and by name. Every one of these is to become a road by which we are to find our way into the very presence of the Eternal.

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard?" All holy fellowships, all pure love, all great comradeship, all deep tenderness, all the light above the years, sound the same refrain, whose challenge is a prophecy and whose grave music—like 'the last echo born of a great cry'—is pregnant with philosophies and religions. Duty takes up the chanted challenge, love repeats it, experience urges it home, the seas sing it as they break at our feet, the stars repeat it from their stations in the skies; it is the refrain of joy and sorrow, it speaks in the shotted guns of far-flung battle lines and becomes articulate in the very destinies of nations. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard?" If religion did nothing more than ask us thus to listen, halt us in our restlessness and set us gravely to considering the meaning of every aspect of experience, its service would be supreme, for so it would call us back to God.

But still the song goes on: "He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength." All that has gone before would be idle mockery without this last assurance. Of what avail is it to lift up our eyes to the hills, or to let our vision be carried far, far beyond them, if no help can come to us from that one in whom our vision finally rests? Of what avail is the sacramental suggestion of the presence of God, if His presence is not our peace; the suggestion of His power, if His power is not our re-enforcement? Nay, He is at our service. "He giveth power to the faint; he changeth our strength." This is no mere rapt assurance of the mystic and the prophet. All the

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

ministers of strength are the ministers of God. He increaseth strength in every mouthful of bread which He gives to the hungry; in every draught of water which earth-born springs offer to the weary. "He giveth power to the faint" in the might of falling waters, in the stored treasures of forests and mines, in the swift wonder of electricity, in the pregnant combinations of chemical forces. Edison is said while crossing the ocean to have paced the deck, crying out against the woeful waste of the power of the waves and of the tides. We shall harness them some day and make them serve our purpose and our comfort; but when we have made them our ministers they will be nothing other than God giving power to the faint through the impact of waters nursed into might by the winds, and the tides, which are nothing other than the imponderable attractions of the sun and moon and stars harnessed to the ponderable mass of the seas.

"He giveth power to the faint" in the great spiritual conclusions by which men are sustained, in every noble endeavor, in love, in the sense of duty, in devotion, consecration, in the martyr's passion, the patriot's fire and the ardor of the saint. "He giveth power to the faint" in great assurances, of the sure triumph of all righteousness and the worth of every unselfish effort. "He giveth power to the faint" in mystic communions which clarify our judgments, purify our love, re-create our souls. Yes, "He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might He increaseth strength"; — "changeth" strength is the literal word.

We have grown used to exchanging our strength; we exchange the strength of our hands for the power of the trip-hammer, smiting with the impact of a hundred tons. We exchange the strength of our halting feet for

## THE SUPREME SERVICE OF RELIGION

the swiftness of monster engines. We exchange the strength of our eyes for the penetrating vision of the telescope which reveals the invisible. We exchange our halting voices for the space-defying service of the electrical current. We exchange our individual strength for the cooperative power of cities, commonwealths, and nations. Why should we not change our strength by the appropriation of the strength of God? All these lesser things are His ministers; why should we not deal directly with their Master? Why should we be so eager to avail ourselves of an atom of His energy when the source of it all is at our service, or content ourselves with the "hem of His garment" when we might be transformed by the light of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ? "Cast your burdens on the Lord, for He careth for you." Be done with all the fret and weariness of insistent and un comforted lives. In love, obedience, faith, appropriation, prayer, mystic communion, yield yourselves to the Everlasting Arms. Let the joy and the power of it become more real to you than the rising or setting suns; for the strength of the Lord is the secret of our joy.

Here, then, is the culmination of the service of religion to life; it re-creates, re-enforces and transforms. All lesser strengths presently fail us. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall." The inadequacy of human strength in its most abundant and seemingly inexhaustible form is God's opportunity. It is because we faint without God that with Him we "shall mount up with wings as eagles. We shall run, and not be weary." The swift progress of our plans shall carry us tirelessly if we rest in Him. "We shall walk and not faint"; we shall be equal to the hard road, to the task which demands endless patience,

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

to the ascent which has to be climbed step by staggering step, while we pant for breath. Those to whom God has become real shall find in Him the secret of all endurance and conquest. The final service of religion to life is the gift of the capacity really to live.

## II

### THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

*"The eternal God is thy dwelling-place,  
And underneath are the everlasting arms."*

—Deuteronomy 33 : 27a.

Such words as these are at once our comfort and our despair. Our comfort because they testify to a sustaining and encompassing love which will leave us neither lonely nor defenceless. Our despair because they breathe a vast and comforting assurance we no longer fully share.

In faith's far morning God was nearer, more conceivable than now. Then the thunder was His voice, the pestilence upon occasion His sword. He fought on the side of His friends; He gave or withheld rain; He clothed the tops of lonely mountains with the blinding glory of His presence, and the greatest of His servants spoke face to face with Him as a man speaketh with his friend. He led His marching hosts with pillars of light or sheltered them from their pursuing foes by moving screens of clouds. Surely we, from whom God seems so far withdrawn, may well envy those to whom He was always so near. We have lost the secret of the simple faith of an elder time; we have not yet resolved the emerging conceptions of mighty dominancies, and far-flung laws, and immensities of space and time, which control our thought and imagination, into a new sense of the presence of God, a new consciousness of a Father's care. Like Job we cry:

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

“Oh, that I knew where I might find him!  
That I might come even to his seat!

\* \* \* \* \*

Behold I go forward, but he is not there;  
And backward, but I cannot perceive him;”

We stand between two worlds; one dead, the other, not indeed powerless to be born, but strangely slow in its gestation. But by the very measure that task is the more difficult it is the more inspiring. We have spaces of knowledge and experience waiting to be flooded with that sense of God which has been from of old the courage of the warrior, the wisdom of the lawgiver, the lyric confidence of the prophet and the mystic's inner joy, compared with which the little God-filled channels of that old Hebrew faith are as an estuary to the sea itself, spaces which wait only for the turning of the tide to be gathered, and forever, into the bosom of the illimitable deep.

For, beyond debate, the sense of the presence of God has so long been an ebbing tide that all the coasts of life are left bare of wonder and mystery. The thunder is no longer the voice of God but the detonation of air cloven by the lightning's rush; the pestilence is no longer the sword of the Most High, unsheathed in wrath and put up again in answer to the prayer of agonizing nations. The clouds have long ceased to be the shadow of the hand of God; the children they of sea-born vapors and earth-born winds. Realm by realm, law has had its way and widened its empire and always, we have been blind enough or foolish enough to begin to think—at the cost of the presence of God. What place for Him in a world whose sequences are inevitable and whose activities are but the manifestation of combinations of forces which afford, from start to finish, not even so much as a crevice for any intrusion of an outer force? And

## THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

because we could not see any place for God save in gaps and crevices we have offered Him no better doors than the doors of our ignorance. "Surely," we have said, "since we do not know the origins of matter, God may come in by that door, and since we do not know the genesis of life, God may come in by that door, and since we do not know the beginnings of consciousness, we have still need of Him." But such assurances as these have brought us no real comfort. We are always in a panic lest some new knowledge should confound our faith, and we have feared the light-bringers until we persuaded ourselves, and alas, persuaded them also, that they were the foes of the Most High.

We are coming to see quite clearly that all these are unwise and even desperate expedients. If God is at the mercy of our ignorance, if He is at best to be called in when everything else breaks down, the Everlasting Arms can have no real meaning for us. Our sense of the presence of God must be re-established not in gaps and ignorances and regions as yet unconquered by knowledge, but rather in the whole kindling joy of what we know, in our ever widening sense of the dominance of law and the unhindered march of increasing and indwelling powers. Here we shall find ourselves the true comrades of those who knew Him first. They found Him in the whole body of their experience, knew Him in their world and its activities, established Him in their whole full understanding of life and truth. Directly we begin to find God in the light rather than the shadow, in our knowledge rather than our ignorance, in spacious and truth-lit ordered realms, we begin to discover how rich we really are and how we may well take upon our lips in wonder and adoration the ancient words of the wrestling Jacob: "Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not."



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

We are like men lost in a country which they have always known; the fogs which have hidden from us the familiar landmarks of the soul are mists of light and not darkness. Now as they begin not so much to clear as to be resolved by a more penetrating vision, the familiar summits of hills long known and loved, but for a little lost, begin to show themselves anew. The eternal God is still our refuge and the Everlasting Arms are nearer than before. We should have known it long ago. The poets and prophets of science have been crying it all abroad for two full generations. The scientists themselves have been the ministers — not the foes — of the Most High, laboratories have been holy places and the very conclusions of which we have been most afraid have been successive revelations of the upholding and undergirding arms. Our chemists and physicists have been road-makers for the King. Beneath their touch wonder and mystery have been reborn, matter has melted into force, and force been joined to force. With the turning of this vaster tide our little separate and desolate pools of unrelated knowledge have been married by inflooding waters whose salt freshness has transformed them, and whose deepening wideness has swallowed them up.

And now that sea — the sea of an immanent force — laps us with its mystic tides. “Not a leaf rots by the wayside without force in it. How else could it rot?” Suns and stars are children of a common mother whose cosmic travail is made manifest in swirling nebulae and whose eonian children die but to be reborn. “Detached, separated? I say there is no such separation: nothing hitherto was ever stranded, cast aside; but all, were it only a withered leaf, works together with all; is borne forward on the bottomless, shoreless flood of Action.”



## THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The scientist has his own wise names for all this — he calls it the conservation of energy and the unity of force — but we know that it is God come near to us. The suggestion of His presence breaks at our feet in every wave of the sea of power. He comes closer still in the sea of being. He gathers us to Himself again upon the ampler tides of truth; He possesses us in love and meets our need in self-revelations of sacrifice and establishes the cross upon our sky-line. By roads down which we thought to have dismissed it faith returns into power,

“ And mind and soul according well  
Do make one music as before,  
But vaster.”

I. Here then is the first condition of the practice of the presence of God: the exercise of reverence and insight in dealing with the reports of science and the widening empire of truth. True this is only the beginning, it has neither warmth, nor intimacy, nor personal content enough to satisfy our more personal spiritual need, but it is at least a point of departure. Nay, more than that, it is a governing condition. We are under bonds to accept whatever account of our world and its operations, and of ourselves and our genesis, is finally established; and we are under bonds to find in it all the upholding of the Everlasting Arms. They are there! They are there! And if our sense of them is wanting the fault is not in the God who is striving to teach us in uncounted ways how near and loving He is, but in the dimness of our souls.

We are equally under bonds to the same insight in our thought about conduct, our definitions of goodness. The Everlasting Arms are extended, not only in brooding intimacies of force, but in the laws and restraints of duty.

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

Goodness has never been anything else than the revelation of the mind of God about the deeds of men, and though the laws of right and wrong be shaped in the legislation of experience they are none the less the laws of God.

Here as everywhere else we are offered a more intimate and heartening revelation; here as everywhere else God has not withdrawn: He has come closer. Matthew Arnold, putting into a single sentence the verdict of battlefields and chambers of debate, the triumph of dominant causes, the rise and fall of nations, and the final and inclusive meaning of an age-old strife, has told us there is a "Power not ourselves, making for righteousness." It is God, fighting as of old the battles of goodness, sustaining and re-enforcing His soldiers, crowding the hills with his horses and chariots for the succor of the beleaguered. Aye, commanding the sun to stand still upon Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon till the day is won.

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;  
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword,  
His truth is marching on."

Further still, the practice of the presence of God demands the same confident acceptance of whatever is likely to be solidly established as to the genesis of religion itself. Without doubt religion began very simply, to be perfected in experience, purified by discipline, restated in terms of ascending knowledge, recast in purer consecrations, reborn in holier devotions, and constantly widening itself in synchrony with our widening capacities to receive and understand. But it is none the less religion. Its holy books are still holy though we trace them to their sources and strive to untangle their

## THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

mingled web of truth and misconception. Its altars are still sacred though we discern in what temper the earliest altar fires were kindled and how their cruel smoke obscured the God they sought to please. Its hymns of worship still breathe our wonder and our adorations, though the first hymns were the rude chanting of superstition and the grave and noble music of our organs was fathered in the wild beating of cymbals and the strange frenzies of an elder time.

We increasingly recognize that there have been many roads into our Father's presence, we no longer scorn the prayers of the ignorant and untaught, we see in our own Christianity but the full revelation of Him whom so many have ignorantly worshipped. But all this does not take away from us our sense of God; it should rather fill us with a great wonder at that infinite patience which has availed itself of the needs and sorrows and wonder of men from the morning of time, brooded over the belated, the ignorant, the untaught and the mistaken, seized every opportunity to help us better to understand, and left no man ever or anywhere without some witness of itself.

We are to discern the undergirding arms in our own souls in action. All this new wonder of psychology which is interesting us so much has this distinct message, renders this distinct service: it helps us to understand God; it suggests the doors by which He enters life. Prayer, conversion, the new birth have had a place made for them in the classrooms of the universities. The spirit still bloweth where He listeth but we are beginning to see that He also has His laws. There are gates of divine invasion which have never been closed, ways of communion which have never been stopped. We are being taught anew the way in which spirit with spirit

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

can meet. Begbie's stories of "Twice Born Men" bring new meaning to an old interview on a housetop at midnight. It is increasingly evident that there are stores of spiritual strength upon which we have drawn all too scantily and which are unspeakably potent in rehabilitations and empowerment in every region of life. This is the truth at the heart of the superficialities and invocations of Christian Science; this the gleam of true light through all the fogs of new thought. What is it all? It is God offering Himself in the mystic wonder of the inner life. Our laws are His thought, and every suggestion of fuller strength or richer personality is but the disclosure of the Everlasting Arms.

Then there are the circumstances of life, especially its more difficult and trying experiences. The atheism which empties life of any gladdening sense of commerce with the Divine and sterilizes all our nobler endeavor is very much more likely to be rooted in our doubt of God's loving and personal dealing with us than in any doubt of his vaster manifestations. It is hard enough to look out upon a world whose order is so unchanging and whose regnant forces seem so far removed from any intimation of the truly spiritual and there to discover the intimations of a Divine Presence, but it is harder still to look sorrow in the face and see God behind that gray cowl, to walk hand in hand with pain and be humbly sensible of a Father's leading or through the numbing wearinesses of life to apprehend a care which sees to it that not even a sparrow falls to the earth in vain. Here if anywhere we are likely to fail, here indeed the most of us do fail. How shall we discover the Everlasting Arms in unfulfilled hopes and fruitless desires, and in the petty outcome of great expectations, in sorrow and misery, and loss and death? Only as we discern

## THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

them elsewhere: by the search, that is, for their deeper meanings, in a quest conducted by an unfailing trust which accepts whatever comes, persuaded that even though for the time we may not understand its meanings it is nevertheless some part of the divine revelation, some accent of the Holy Ghost.

There is no sense of God like that which is thus attained. Those who have won their faith in a conflict with doubt, or their trust in a hand to hand strife with challenging circumstances, or their serenity in the shock of battle, are not likely thereafter to be disturbed. It is not easy to do this, indeed there is no promise anywhere that a great sense of the presence of God may easily be attained. Such communion is the noblest achievement of the soul, to be won only at the cost of sore spiritual travail. The saints and the mystics have always known something of this toil of the soul. Their glowing assurances have always been born out of the depths; the professions of trust which they fling up into the light are simply the last radiant expression of disciplines and gropings which, though they lightly dismiss them, are never lightly endured. And though we may take their great assurances for our own points of departure, or better still for the goals for which we strive, we shall never make them ours in any real and abiding fashion until we have shared the experiences out of which they were spoken.

II. The second open secret of the practice of the presence of God is obedience. First trust and insight, next the demonstration of obedience. "Then shall ye know," says the prophet, "if ye follow on to know the Lord." Except the one thing to which we shall presently come, nothing is more difficult, more daring than this. To claim lonely spaces as the chambers of a Father's

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

house, to answer gladly "I will" to change and accident, to bare life's hidden places to the seemingly unresponsive, to clothe all conduct with the aspect of obedience, to offer the whole of life as a reverent and willing response to a love and care which often clothe themselves so strangely, this is the greatest thing of which we are capable; it is life's great adventure.

Nor is it ever fruitless. We do not long continue to act as if our lonely lives had a meaning for God without the certainty of an accompanying and controlling Fatherhood rising like an ample dawn to fill all our lives with warmth and light. I do not know words which are either great or strong enough to say all this as it ought to be said, the proof of it is not in the words but in the verification of experience. When we begin to live as if our world was God's world, we discover His presence everywhere. When we begin to serve as if all noble deeds were our response to Him, a great certainty of unfailing personal relationships is borne in upon us like a tide; when we begin to accept whatever comes to us as having a great and personally considered meaning, then life becomes love's discipline and wisdom's revelation.

The life and temper of Jesus Christ are the supreme illustration of all this. His world was not to the eye of sense in any fashion other than our world, yet from first to last he went through it as one who passes from room to room in his Father's house. The mountain sides were places of intimate spiritual communion, angelic presences sought him out and ministered to him in the desert. He saw the love of God made beautiful in the lily, manifest in grasses which blossomed but to die, concerned with the sparrow's flight or the fall of a wounded bird. He filled every attitude, act or utterance with glowing trust, brave obedience and unfailing filial



## THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

self-commitment. He took the cup of bitter necessity as from the hand of love and spake abroad the assurances of a Father's unfailing kindness from the agony of the Cross. We need to be baptised anew in the wonder of such a life as that. The conversations of Jesus Christ from the Cross—"Father, forgive them," "Father, receive me"—represent a self-commitment so divine as to have made them forever the supreme revelation of the divine in this little world of ours. Even the contemptuous speech of those who suffered with him, the hate of those who nailed him to the Tree, the desolation of the scene on the hill and the pathos of an un pitying earth and sky are forgotten, and from that hill Jesus Christ spoke face to face with all that brought him there, not even as a man speaks to his friend but as a son speaks to his father. And it was real, supremely real. If there is anywhere any sincerity in speech, any certainty in testimonies offered under circumstances where every certainty might seem to fail, it is that the Father with whom Jesus Christ spoke was no delusion of a Galilean peasant, but the one encompassing reality to the certainty of which the whole glad, unquestioning, conquering temper of his soul is his supreme testimony.

He shared his certainty with all the world; he taught doubting lips to speak the same great words and halting lives to assume the same great attitudes. Those whom he taught dwelt as he dwelt in a world transformed, and walked as he walked in an intimate and brooding sense of a Father's love which made God more real than all else beside and communion with him their constant spiritual exercise. For (thirdly) communion is the last step in the practice in the presence of God and sets the seal of validity upon the whole process.

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

III. All life is, in a very true way, communion; we live in a web of relationships; every aspect of our life is a sharing. Breathing is communion with the healing tides of the air. Sight is communion with light-born pictures and revelations. Hearing is communion with sound, action is communion with uncounted forces and necessities. Thought is communion with truth, conscience is communion with duty, love is communion with personality. From first to last, from the simplest reflex actions of the newborn child to the policies of the statesman, the proclamations of the prophet, the radiant devotions of the saint, the meditations of the philosopher, the holy intimacies of love, all life is communion,—nothing is real to us save as it enters into our lives, is there reborn, and so issues in a new reality which is neither wholly ourselves nor that with which we are in communion, but which is wholly communion itself. So with the practice of the presence of God. It is an act of communion which begins in simple and seemingly remote ways. All communion with love or truth or duty or beauty or any kind of power is communion with God.

But though the practice of the presence of God may begin in such ways as these it must transcend them. Any communion which makes God real to us must at last lift itself to high levels of conscious spiritual intercourse with Him. Such levels are dangerously near the frontiers of mysticism and upon their uplands it is easy to lose oneself in the mists which blow down from the hills of God, but if mysticism be nothing other than the mystic's certain persuasion of the meaning of God to his own life, then I for one do not see how the practice of the presence of God can possibly stop short of mystical attitudes and tempers. It does not need to begin



## THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

there, nor do we all need to travel the same road or find our certainty of God in the same states and tempers. As there are many gates into the heavenly city, so there are many ways of knowing God and filling life with known realities of spiritual intercourse. But in any case God has become real to us when thought or action or warmth of emotion or steadfastness of purpose, patience, hope, gentleness and joy are in any wise created or increased because we do cast ourselves upon the Everlasting Arms or seek shelter in His unchanging refuge. And when such spiritual states, like inland wells joined by hidden channels to the sea, rise and fall, as our certainty of God ebbs and flows, and when finally all this has risen to the height of conscious purpose and has become one aspect — and in the end it must be the central aspect — of our administration of our lives, then the whole of life is the demonstration of His presence and our repetitions of the hallowed words of the text is no idle echo but the creative testimony of all that is within us.

So the practice of the presence of God beginning in insight and continuing in obedience issues finally in immediate certainties which do not admit contradiction. The final certainty of the divine presence must be in our own experiences. What knowledge we have of earth and stars, of truth and goodness comes back to this at last. We risk everything upon an experience which works, which makes life intelligible, fruitful, possible.

The sense of God is like that. It makes life fruitful, intelligible, possible; it bears whatever weight we put upon it, it fills us with its glorifying light, it holds us fast to our tasks and dismisses us to our visions. It leads us through goodness to power and through discipline to peace. Without it life is a puzzle and with it

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

life is a revelation. It binds men together in noble comradeships and has supplied the hidden bases upon which all that in whose shelter we have been secure, or in whose beauty we have been made glad, is established. Surely we may doubt all else before we doubt the truth of such assurances as these. The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

### III

#### THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

*"Be thou for the people to Godward." — Exodus 18 : 19.*

The verse itself is part of an old and fascinating story. Moses is met in the desert, and at the very beginning of his long tutelage of the Hebrew people by his father-in-law, Jethro, the Priest of Midian. Jethro finds Moses cumbered with much serving, lost in detail, and endeavoring himself to administer all the concerns of all the people. With a wisdom which has in it a strangely modern note, Jethro tells Moses that he is in the way of wearing out both himself and the people, that he must distribute responsibility, secure helpers and subordinates, assign to them the small and passing matters, and reserve for himself the supreme and lonely place, the supreme and initiative service. "Be thou," he says, "for the people to Godward."

There is, then, to begin with, a Godward side to life; not a mere point, nor a line, nor a restricted area, but a whole frontier, a vast and undefined direction, an immeasurably rich and suggestive frontage. The very heart-word of the text itself has its tremendous suggestion, Godward! How it carries with it the very suggestion of our freer forms of speech. It has in it the salt tang of the sea, the spaciousness of the desert, the habits of men who look much to broad horizons, who strive to anticipate the quarter from which the wind will blow, and who bound themselves by nothing less than the cardinal points of the compass, whose frontiers

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

are eastward and westward, northward and southward. Here is a word which is big enough for all the reverent play of our free spirits, and yet a word which constantly leads our thought, our vision and our desire, in one great and inclusive direction, Godward.

There is a Godward side to all thinking, When we have done with all that the laboratories have to tell us, when we have wrung their secret from the stars, when we have sought out the constant and ordered relations of things, we are none the less face to face with brooding mysteries which find but one solution, God. No matter whether you think with the subtlety of the philosopher, who demands his absolute as the first condition of any thought at all, or with the dramatic quality of a Napoleon who points out the Egyptian stars and demands their maker, or with the homely sense of the plain man who wants to know where things came from and why they are what they are, all thought has its upper and its Godward side. It at once suggests and demands the divine; it leads us into holy presences and sets us face to face with mysteries which we cannot solve without God.

There is a Godward side in all conduct. When you have set duty upon her thrones of austere administration, when you have given conscience a clear right of way, when you have yielded yourself to all moral imperatives, have drawn with the utmost clearness the profound distinction between right and wrong, when you have sought the genesis of moral distinctions and have come back dizzy from those depths paved with abysmal shadows, out of which they lift themselves, you are helpless and perplexed without God. Conscience, duty, morality, all have their Godward side; they lead us into His presence by sure and unescapable roads, they

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

demand God for the explanation of their authority, as we need God for strength to obey and serve them.

There is a Godward side to all love and desire, and the rich interplay of the emotional life. There is nothing for love to draw from, there is nothing for love to draw toward, if love does not flow as the tides from the sea out of the bosom of God, and if love does not return as the tides to the sea back to the bosom of God. We need God for spiritual kinship. Without Him we are too lonely for words; if He is not our Father, then we are orphans; and if He is not our Peace, we shall be forever restless. All that which lifts us above ourselves and moves us beyond ourselves is an intimation that the deeper you go into life or the higher above it, the more clearly does its Godward aspect emerge, and the lonelier are our spiritual horizons if God does not fill them. Men feel this who never put it in words; those who have never heard of St. Augustine nevertheless bear their own testimony to the veracity of his utterance, "O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and we are restless till we rest in Thee."

And because a man is a good deal more than just a combination of knowing and feeling and willing, there is a Godward side to the whole of life—restless, red-blooded, perplexed, dramatic in its capacities and incapacities, working, loving, fighting, serving, wandering, falling, rising. And because men do not live alone, but live in fellowships, and because these fellowships are just the interwoven, interwrought and intensified lives of individuals, there is a Godward side to homes and countryside, villages and cities, states and nations, parliaments and federations of mankind; and because men are doing a thousand things, there is a Godward side to business and commerce, and buying and selling, reaping

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

and sowing, and politics and administration, and diplomacy, and the contact of nations; nay, more, with the enlargement and intensification of life the Godward coasts extend themselves, the Godward frontiers become still more vast, the Godward horizons brood beyond us with added depth and mystery, the place which God is to have in life is immeasurably extended, and the need of God in life unspeakably greater.

For it does not always follow that the Godward side of life has God in it — consciously, that is. It may be empty as the sky without a cloud, or the sea without a sail; men may live and die with the Godward side of their lives unsatisfied and unblest, its possibilities unrealized, and its connections unmade. Our lives are like cities, they have within and about them the suggestion of relationships and possibilities beyond the horizon. Every great modern city suggests, in the very machinery of its life, other cities, other lands and other coasts. The railroad lines which go out as spokes from their hub are gleaming lines of invitation, meaningless without other stations, and waiting human fellowships. The wires which fill the air weave a mystic web, suggesting swift and silent communication where, although their voice is not heard, their line is none the less gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. The piers and wharves have the mystery of the sea and the coming and going of ships; while every mast of wireless telegraphy adds mystery to mystery, and suggests a speech which has made the secret vibrations of the unseen its winged messengers.

Suppose all these lines of communication were broken, that the railroad lines end in unpopulated fields, that broken wires dangle idly in the air, that no commerce comes or goes from the wharves, and that no arriving

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

or departing waves leave their record in the stations of wireless telegraphy. How pathetic, how meaningless, how impotent, how contradictory, would be the life of such a city. Some men live like that. Life has for them its Godward side, but that side is empty; its lines of possible communication, but they are broken or unutilized; its stations of communication with the unseen and eternal, but for them there is no commerce with the divine; all the shores of their souls are unspeakably lonely.

If all this is to be changed there must be on the Godward side of us men who help us to come to God and who help — I use the word reverently enough — and who help God to come to us. There are from time to time daring and open and lonely souls who press to the very limit of the Godward horizons of life, and there in the great silences, just where earth gives over and Heaven begins, stand alone with God; or upon some mountain top, whence all their fellows are withdrawn, speak to Him face to face as a man speaketh with his friend. How few they are who have done or can do this, you, yourselves, can tell by trying to name them.

There are a more numerous fellowship who, like Aaron and the seventy elders of Israel, worship afar off; they indeed come to the foot of the mountain of divine revelation, but they do not climb its sides nor dwell upon its summits; they are dependent only upon the first and greatest of teachers; they are almost spiritually self-sufficient, and although they would never find God unhelped, they are not largely dependent upon other men for the wealth and peace of their spiritual lives. But the most of us need constant human fellowship in the regions of the spiritual; we must be led to God by those who are close to us, and sustained in His presence by



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

our friends. I do not mean to say that, once having found the road, there is not any one of us who may not come close to God, but I do mean to say that the great majority of men cannot worship in loneliness nor find God without human suggestion and guidance. Here, then, is one of the great tasks and great opportunities of us all. We, who by His grace have some vision of God, though clouded, any certainty of his presence, though sometimes interrupted, any conception of the worth and necessity of the spiritual, have one outstanding task; we are to live on the Godward side of men.

We must, indeed, live either to the one side or to the other of our fellows; if we are not on their Godward side, then we are on that side whose ways take hold on death. We must suggest to all those whom we meet, either the higher or the lower, the stained or the stainless, the temporal or the eternal. We have no option, and it is well for us to look this thing directly in the face. To be on the Godward side of men is at once the joy and the power of life; to know that through us, and the suggestions of our lives, other men are coming closer and closer to the divine and climbing toward the light, is to surprise, as we may hope to surprise nowhere else and in no other fashion, the very secret of Jesus. Here, then, is the supreme opportunity and the supreme task of all good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

For there is sore need today that the Godward side of life should be filled with new meaning and power. There is an increasing paganization of society which should sober us all. I do not believe, thank God, that this holds true in the world of thought. There the spiritual tide is mounting with the days, but in the realm of conduct it does hold true. Every year more



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

men are working six days in the week, without any real spiritual sanction for their work, and spending the seventh without either worship, prayer or praise. Along with all this has gone an increasing passion for humanity, an increasing clamor for corporate righteousness and civic goodness, a statistical increase of church membership, and a great increase of activity on the part of church organizations; but underneath it all there is an increasing divorce of the moralities, the decencies, the conventionalities and even the idealities of society from the life of the spirit and the fellowship of God. It is because this is so, that so much which we do is futile. Our endeavor after corporate and civic righteousness is like Penelope's web; that which we weave in the light is unraveled in the darkness; what we build is sapped and mined. The travail of our spirits is out of all proportion to that which is born thereof, and the fundamental and far-reaching restlessness of society is almost without explanation, if not that men are trying to make over the world without that hold upon God which gives them a shelter in time of storm, a rock of defence, and the one reenforcing power which never knows defeat. For multitudes of men the Godward horizons of life are empty or occupied only by dissolving creeds and fleeting associations; they must be filled again, and before they are full of the divine they must be full of the divine suggestion of the human. To every one of us, cumbered with many things, and tangled in our coil of organization, there comes, as the voice of God, the clear word of Jethro, the Priest of Midian, "Get ye to the Godward side of this people."

We are to get to the Godward side of politics; there are men enough on the other side. The Godward side is neither Republican nor Democratic, Insurgent or Con-

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

servative; the Godward side of politics is the side of clear vision, unselfish devotion to the common good, a willingness to be used by the State rather than to use the State; a thoroughgoing detachment from the conception of legislation as a direct or indirect means for personal exploitation; it is the side of a willingness to bear much, to hope much, to battle, to be misunderstood, to look up into the clear light of the ideal, to be faithful in small duties, willingly to accept great responsibilities and to declare a war without a peace against the corrupt, the stained, the foolish and the false.

We are to get to the Godward side of the conduct of business. The Godward side of business is sheer honesty, elemental justice, fine dependableness, a full day's work, painstaking economy, and the sense of all that business means, not only in making products but in making men. They are on the Godward side of business who see that business is not only a private occupation but a public trust, that business is a social service, that rightly conceived it may become sacramental, and that rightly administered it may teach men in holy sacrifice and self-denial, the very secret of the pain and power of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

We are to get on the Godward side of men in just plain practical living; we are to keep the spirit uppermost, restrain, if need be, colorless moral qualities, for our brother's sake; if need be, do without some things which do not hurt us, in order that he may be helped; withdraw our patronage from the booths of Vanity Fair and so live that all those market-places which the world, the flesh and the devil have set up for the sale of doubtful and stained commodities may be starved out of business.

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

We are to get on the Godward side of men in worship and the fellowships of religion. Men will not come into our churches unless other men are their doors of entrance, nor will they stay there if there are not other men in the pews. Boys will not stay in the Sunday school if they do not see their fathers thereabouts. There is grave need that men, otherwise unblamable in life, should here seriously consider what they are doing and what they are leaving undone. I know more than one family where the grandfather was beyond praise, faithful and devout in all church ministrations, where the grandson never darkens a church door, and where the real fault rests with the father, who has allowed his pleasures or his preoccupation, or the growing grossness of his spirit, to interrupt the one true and imperative apostolic succession through which the Holy Catholic Church always has been and always must be constituted, the consecration of the son by the father to those obligations and responsibilities of spiritual service which will never give over until the church militant has become the church triumphant.

We are to get to the Godward side of men in the spiritual, the mystic, and all that realm of personal relationship with God so difficult to define in words, so clearly known in experience, so rich in consequence, so imperatively necessary. Here we deal with men rather by the intimations of our lives than by those things which we more directly say. We are reticent, it is not easy for us to speak one to the other of the deep things of our spirits, but none the less men will always note whether or not we have been with God; what our words do not say, our accent will suggest; and what our acts do not directly declare, the very intimations of our personality will make evident. One life was the creed

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

of creeds, and all those who follow Christ are the articles perpetually rewritten of that creed. If we get to the Godward side of men in our brooding desires, in our secret imaginations, in our hidden fellowships, in ultimate and unspeakable sanctities, we shall fill their very horizons with the certified assurance of spiritual reality, and above us there will rise, as the coming of the morning, a sense of God so evident that all the earth and sky will be full of Him, and men will doubt the dawn which fills their eyes before they doubt the dawn which fills their spirits.

We are to do all this in brotherhood. It is given only to Moses and his kind to dwell alone with God. The brooding loneliness of his story, from the burning bush on the back side of the Midian desert to the lonely death and the grave undug of human hands on Nebo's summit, is an atmosphere too rare for us to breathe. We need to work and walk with others, and by the grace of God, revelations of Him become possible in comradeship and fellowship which are impossible for us one by one. Comradeship is God's chiefest channel; when all sorts and conditions of people stand together, there God finds His opportunity, and we who would be crushed if we mediated alone between the divine and the human, find joy and rapture in mediating fellowships. A lonely mediation was the heaviest burden, even of Jesus Christ, and I wonder if his cry of lonely despair, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me!" was not wrung from his heart and his lips because he hung alone on the last sky-line between the human and divine, in his unshared and unsharable task of supreme and sacrificial mediation between God and man.

And yet I would not forget that we cannot live with

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

God in brotherhood with others unless we have our own lonely communion with him. If we are to live on the Godward side of men in saving and victorious comradeship, we are to live on the Godward side of men in the lonely and intimate fellowships of our own spirits. The closer we come to God, the more deeply shall we mediate between Him and His children. The man who is farthest from God has all humanity between him and his Father. The man who is nearest God is to the Godward side of all men. As we establish more and more intimately, in thought and action and desire, widening points of contact between ourselves and God, as more and more like Jacob we find Him where we did not dream He dwelt, as more and more prayer becomes a great and power-producing discipline of the soul, and holy meditations kindle holy fires, as more and more our senses of value are clarified and the sources of strength are made plain — as all this is done, we shall come more and more to the Godward side of men, and build living ways between the sons and daughters of God and the light of their Father's house and the joy of their Father's presence.

Finally, the nearer we come to Christ the more nearly the whole range of our lives will be to the Godward. He is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. Through him God comes close to us that we may draw near to God. It needs the wisdom of the philosopher to find God in the great interpretations of thought and experience, it needs the passion of the prophet to find God in the tumultuous tides of human history, it needs the sensitiveness of the mystic to find Him in the lonely sanctuary of the soul, it needs the singing insight of the poet to find Him in stars and flowers and changing seasons — but all simple human need may find God in

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

Christ. And as we draw near to him we come through the power of Christian discipleship into a divine communion which joins us to God as the tides of the sea to their coasts. As we serve and follow him we make God real to a needy world and offer to all who approach us the mediation of an holy love and wisdom and goodness. For our own sake and our world's sake let us thus turn Godward. We are in the midst of strife and we are hard beset. We shall find our reenforcement, not as of old in the horses and chariots of God made visible to doubting eyes on the encompassing hills; if we are to win the battle we want men to the Godward side of us. For the day of our deliverance will have come when those in the thick of the fight and fearful, lifting up suddenly opened eyes, shall see all those sides of life between them and God full of men and women through whom the assurance of the continuing power of God shall come like the morning, and with whom, like the company of the shining ones who came down to meet Christian, they shall go up singing through the gates into the City.

## IV

### THE GREAT ADVENTURE

*"Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward."*  
— *Deuteronomy 2 : 3.*

The historians of Israel made of the wanderings of their ancestors an epic rich in the remembered goodness of God. They marked every stage of that journey by some divine command or prohibition, and filled the very skies beneath which their fathers marched, or fought, or camped with the brooding light — or shadow — of Jehovah's presence. They discovered in every wayside spring the mercy of the God of the deserts and so interpreted the experiences of wandering tribes in terms of divine shelter and discipline that we, who have been nurtured upon this august and kindling record, instinctively make it a symbol of our own wanderings and find therein much which guides and heartens us as we also make our journeys from some land of bondage to the land of promise.

Well, then, these comrades of the morning of faith had halted in their desert journeyings at Mt. Seir. This is not so much a mountain as an upland region at the head of the Gulf of Akabah, half way up the eastern side of that strange triangle of burning sun and barren sand and volcanic rock through which for so many years the ancestors of the Hebrew people took their wandering way. It is really a kind of borderland between the utter desolation of the desert and the more fertile countries to the north. It would mean much for any



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

people with flocks and herds who had been long in the waterless, grassless, burning regions further south, to come into a countryside whose upland spaces gave them a breath of coolness for themselves and pasture for their flocks; compared with what they had been through, that was promised land enough for them. So between their own weariness and the allurements of the land they did exactly what we are all prone to do. They made a stage in life's journey the end of the journey, and began to turn what was meant to be only a halt into an habitation. Then God spake to them: "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you to the northward. Your journeying is not yet done nor your mission accomplished. You are pilgrims through this country, not sojourners; get you on your way." They heard the voice and obeyed it and came in the end, after much wandering and fighting, across Jordan itself and into Canaan.

The dust of the years is deep across it all, but the significance of it all is beyond debate. We hardly know who they were, these Hebrews of three thousand years ago, whose migrations brought them at last by way of the east across Jordan and into the upland country which lies between the valley of Jordan and the Mediterranean; but we do know, humanly speaking, that had they not followed whatever led them on, refusing to rest until they had come into the land of their hearts' desire, we should never have had Jerusalem nor Bethlehem nor Nazareth, nor our Bible, nor our faith. God works through long, mysterious processes. We this morning belong by spiritual descent to those who so long ago came down from the slopes of Mt. Seir and set their faces toward the north.

There is in the text, moreover, a rich suggestion for



## THE GREAT ADVENTURE

us all. We too are pilgrims: life will not let us rest. We may call our pilgrimage what we will — growth, or development, or work, or love, or life itself; but we are always going somewhere. The very years themselves will not let us be. If we are going nowhere else we are going from youth through maturity to age, and from age to what lies beyond the shadow. Nothing is static. Change is one of the laws of God; and surely what we are in the end most concerned about is to make the journey bravely and not to fail of some worthy destination. Each region of life is always calling us to some larger thing which lies beyond. You are never satisfied with your business. You feel instinctively that each year must somehow show an advance over the year before. My business friends sometimes explain to me just why this must be so, and how a business which is not gaining is really losing. I must confess that I cannot always see their logic, but I understand their spirit. For they too are pilgrims and find the deeper joy of business administration in the sense of going on. What they are most concerned about is not so much the financial outcome — although they are not likely to underestimate the importance of that — as somehow the attainment of a growing efficiency. Their promised land is always before them.

Your scholars have the same instinct; they are not happy unless they are always widening the domain of their knowledge, making some new excursion into the undiscovered country and securing for truth a nobler sovereignty. Those who seek perfected character are also pilgrims. They are never content with the measure of goodness they have attained. There is always before them some height as yet ungained of integrity and obedience, calling them as from afar and sometimes scourg-

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

ing their very souls with the unhappy knowledge of what they are and the flaming ideal of what they ought to be.

And yet, over against all this there is the wholly human temptation to halt by the way—and even through sheer weariness or contentment with some lesser good, miss the goal. No one who knows his own heart wonders at this; for after all, any journey is a wearying thing and the journey of life itself the most wearisome of all. It is easy enough to talk about ideals; it is tremendously hard to live up to them. When the first driving forces at whose bidding we set out begin to spend themselves and the ways grow long and we have come to some Mt. Seir or other, cool and reasonably pleasant, with some little reach of vision and room enough for a certain measure of action, the temptation to stay there becomes almost irresistible. We never confess—or believe—at the beginning of such wayside halts that they are to be permanent. We find an excuse in our weariness and need of rest. “Let us,” we say to conscience and vision and purpose, “stay our journey for a little; there is still time enough; we have really come a long way and done a great deal. Let us wait a while on these upper slopes. This is not indeed the promised land, but it is pleasant enough; and we may count ourselves fortunate to have come as far as we have; after a little we will take up our way again.”

Sometimes we are halted by obstacles which we have not for the time being force enough to overcome; either something within us, some driving power, has given way, or some unusual combination of circumstances confronts us, or we have really underestimated the difficulties of what we have undertaken; at any rate we “fetch up,” and instead of going straight on, we begin to compass

## THE GREAT ADVENTURE

some Mt. Seir or other, leaving day by day a more deeply worn path to mark the stages of our weariness or our cowardice, losing day by day the power to really enfranchise ourselves and turn toward further, braver things.

Very often what halts us is more subtle and more portentous. The great temptation of middle life is the unwillingness to take risks. The sense of our responsibilities weighs heavily upon us. We find ourselves at the centre of a web of relationships and obligations. We have begun to accumulate all sorts of things — businesses and clients, patients, houses, securities, convictions, creeds, prejudices, and all that increasing baggage train, corporeal and incorporeal, by which our progress is attended. The whole sheer weight of things as they are handicaps and entangles us in the endeavor after things as they ought to be. We are, in a very noble figure of Dr. George Gordon's, like mountain streams drawn from upland sources which, as they come nearer the sea, forget their early eagerness, slacken in their movement, spread themselves sluggishly over shallow beds, and at the last lose themselves in a stagnation which is the very breeding-place of mists and poisons. Quietness and contentment pass with fearful ease over into sloth and stagnation, and sloth and stagnation poison the soul.

We are always needing to hear the voice of God. "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you to the north. You are not done yet. Follow love and truth and goodness, to the end and at any cost. Free yourselves from the narrowing coils of habit; continue your journey toward the true goal. You are children of the future, not of the past; you are the true citizens not of the land of things as they are, but of the land of things as they ought to be." The God who

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

thus commands us has many voices — whatever challenges us, whatever will not let us rest in anything short of the best, is His spirit moving within us: whatever calls us toward any kind of goodness, whether in fellowship or in character, is His voice.

I thank God this morning for the wonder of what He offers us; for hopes and visions and dreams and the divine insight of a nobler life. I thank God that nowhere do we discern, either within our own souls or in the restlessness of our world, any halting place. I do not envy those who have nothing to dream of, nothing to seek, nothing to fight for. I do not believe that even heaven itself can be a place of satisfied desire with nothing above or beyond. Love and truth and goodness have no terminals either in time or eternity. They have all the fulness of the Divine itself. We may journey toward them forever, and still they may call us to something yet to be attained. We may climb as high and as far as we will, there will still be "other heights in other lives." While we live we must climb. I thank God, too, for everything which either leads, or compels us, to forsake the lesser and the incomplete for the sake of a richer and fuller life.

Those providences which break up our very world beneath our feet may be most truly the method of our Father's love. Sorrow and loss and pain, as they turn our questioning vision toward deeper meanings and other joys or more enduring fellowships, are a part of the Eternal Goodness. It may be that we shall see in some clear future light that the travail and tragedy of our world today are but the compulsions of an infinite wisdom, breaking beneath and about us the shelters of material well-being in which the civilization of the twentieth century was in sore danger of losing itself.

## THE GREAT ADVENTURE

"Come," God is saying in the shock of battle and the incessant thunder of guns and dissolving dreams and hopes, — "ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you to the north. The France and England and Germany and Russia and America which now you see through the smoke of battle are not what they were meant to be. There is a richer, happier world somewhere beyond: trust your faith in it, follow your hope of it, spend yourselves to bring it true: arise, go on your way."

Each one of us this morning, as he searches his own soul and his own circumstances, will hear some such call as this. I have sometimes thought that the greatest spiritual danger of a congregation like this, of a community like ours, is to be content with the lesser good and to fail in the spirit of spiritual adventure and moral daring. The very mellowness of our culture and the very elements of finish in our social order, nay, the very want of glaring faults and deficiencies of a coarser and more evident sort, are really our most subtle danger. There was a time when New England was a community of social and spiritual pilgrims, willing to undertake all kinds of experiments, dreaming and daring. Roger Williams, toward the end of his life, would call himself nothing but a "seeker," and he and his like left behind them generations of "seekers" who have made New England what it is socially, industrially and spiritually.

I wonder if this spirit of adventure has not somehow spent itself. If we are to seek it in America today, as it expresses itself in social enthusiasms, new political combinations, or profound human passions, we shall not find it on this side of the Hudson River. It has taken the valley of the Mississippi for its dwelling-place. It has climbed the ranges of the western mountains; it is setting

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

up its habitations on the shores of the Pacific. We need a re-baptism in the spirit of our fathers. For all noble living is an adventure toward the ideal. The lesser certainties or sanctities have their own values, but we can never come into the "land of ought to be" save as we turn in faith and courage toward its shining heights. Love and truth and goodness are always daring us to risk something for their sake.

I do not know how to make all this as practical and as flaming as it ought to be; but I do know that any real progress toward better things is always at a price. We must take some chances. We cannot be really secure and really great at the same time except as we know that all are secure who follow truth and love and goodness, at whatever cost and wherever they lead. Faith itself is simply the adventuring of life upon what must be true if life is to have any meaning at all, but which can never be proved until we have ventured out upon it.

There was a time when all the blessed commonplaces of our sheltered lives were ideals to be struggled for, dreams to die for, hopes to battle for. We live in a land which Europe never knew until Christopher Columbus made the great adventure. We are the children of a spiritual order which had never existed, had not a handful of men and women faced an unfriendly sea in a leaky ship for the sake of their faith. Our liberty, whether civil, political or religious, is the realization of hopes and aspirations for which through the centuries the prophets of liberty spent themselves, and the shining army of the soldiers of the common good lived and battled and died. Our Christian faith was once the lonely conviction of One who sealed his testimony with his cross and claimed the future as his own, even though mocked and scourged and spit upon.



## THE GREAT ADVENTURE

God has been speaking to thinkers and scholars since man first began to think, saying again and again, "Ye have compassed this mountain of knowledge, or thought or certainty or science, long enough: turn you to the promised land." So Copernicus ventured everything upon his faith that the earth is round, and Galileo upon his faith that the earth moves, and Newton upon his confidence in the law of gravitation. The great names of modern science, Sir Humphrey Davy, Jenner, Lavoisier, Faraday, Tyndall, Darwin, Louis Pasteur, Sir Joseph Lister and a fellowship too great to enumerate, are but the names of men who heard some accent of the Holy Ghost and turned their faces toward the vaster world of undiscovered truth.

What is true of the scientist has been true of the inventor. What is true of the inventor has been true of the great creative statesman. Cavour dreamed of United Italy for a generation and was mocked for his faith. Gladstone shook the very bases of English society through his faith in English democracy, and Lloyd-George, who is today the leader of the blood-tempered resolution of the English people, was within the easy memory of every one of us here this morning, the most hated man in England through his flaming passion for social justice. And what shall I say of saints who have forsaken all for a life "hid with Christ in God," or of the missionaries who were a hundred years ago thought the most impossible dreamers by a Church which had lost its confidence in the conquering power of Jesus Christ—or the champions of a fuller faith who were but yesterday abused or denied, for the sake of what is today as dear to us as light and air? These all heard some accent of the Holy Ghost saying to them, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

to the north," and their daring obedience has become our vision and our peace.

It is not easy to save such considerations as these from a certain note of unreality. We are not wanting in the capacity to dare and even to dare greatly. Courage is not dead. Thirteen embattled nations testify to that. But courage waits upon occasion, and daring upon a cause, and just now, we say, there is nothing in sight which asks of us such surrenders or such adventures as life has again and again asked of those who have become soldiers and pioneers and road builders for the King.<sup>1</sup> There is, I admit, a measure of truth in all this; but in part what I am urging is simply the recognition of the place of spiritual adventure in the Christian life. I would remember for myself and for you the spiritual perils of such sheltered and comfortable lives as we for the most part are leading. If we can do nothing more than keep alive within us the sense of the incompleteness of what we are and what we do, if we can hold fast to some brave willingness to follow whatever calls us beyond ourselves and at whatever cost — and if we can keep alive upon our spiritual altars the flame of a clear devotion to the spirit and ideals of Jesus Christ, in which everything else must, if need be, be consumed, then we shall not have listened to this ancient exhortation in vain.

But I am persuaded that the matter goes deeper than that — deeper individually, deeper corporately. We have only to search our souls to discover some habit or other which stands between us and the larger spiritual realization, or some unwillingness to obey the clear-heard voice of Jesus, or some wasting halt in the

<sup>1</sup> This and the paragraphs that follow were written before our own participation in the war had changed everything for us and offered us the supreme occasion. But I have let it stand. It is still true.



## THE GREAT ADVENTURE

onward movement of our lives, — some interruption which checks our growth in grace and knowledge; and very likely if we are really honest with ourselves we shall find such spiritual states are rooted in our clinging to the lesser securities, and our unwillingness to leave the shelter and take to the open road; and just because of this, joy and power are failing us, and we are living too largely in routine and not enough in kindling purpose or summoning vision.

Nor do I believe that our time is lacking in opportunities for the Great Adventure. God is speaking to us as He has never spoken to any age. He is calling us to the great adventure of a righteous peace. War is not the greatest adventure. War is after all, when you have searched out the roots and meanings of it, but our human cleaving to methods and traditions and ideals and forces which we should long ago have outgrown, and which we will not surrender because we fear to give them up. The fear of peace which is everywhere manifest in the world today, which sings in poems, speaks through philosophies, argues in diplomacies and becomes incarnate in statecraft, is the strangest fear which has ever obsessed humanity. It is not the pacifist today who is taking to shelter and who fears to put his faith to the test; it is the militarist who is taking to shelter. He is afraid to trust justice except as it be armed with machine-guns, and brotherhood except as it be attended by mobilized armies, or truth except as it is cast into shells. Humanity has come to a moral impasse; and unless there is somewhere force enough or courage enough, either in a nation or in a great body of makers of public opinion, to venture even our security and our defense for the sake of the ideals of Christian brotherhood, I for my part do not see how they will find lodg-

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

ment in this world. I know how impracticable this sounds and how easy it is to dismiss the men who say such things as idle dreamers, wholly out of touch with the world of reality.

Well, it may be that we are dreamers; but this one thing at least is true, whether our dreams be right or wrong—no one has any right to say that there is no opportunity for spiritual adventure in a world like ours when the very application of the gospel of Jesus Christ to international relationships is dismissed as an idle dream through the risks involved in doing it. There is also the matter of social justice, and those far-reaching reorganizations of all our social and industrial methods to make them more perfectly the instruments of the spirit of Jesus Christ. Every industrial reform has always been an adventure. The champions of a twelve-hour day said a ten-hour day would ruin industry, the champions of a ten-hour day said a nine-hour day would mean bankruptcy, and the champions of a nine-hour day felt the same way about eight hours. Those who have compassed their Mt. Seir of industrial conservatism have seen ruin in the abolition of child labor, poverty in the shortening of hours for women, and all the threats of Socialism in the oversight of hazardous businesses by the State.

Now these illustrations have no value save as they prove one thing—that we never could have gotten anywhere had not some one been willing to risk something for the sake of the safety of men, or the integrity of womanhood, or the happiness of little children. We have hardly more than crossed the threshold of spiritual industry or Christianized business; and before we have made the Lord Christ and his spirit master of it all, we shall be called to venture many times.

## THE GREAT ADVENTURE

A noble morality is always a call to forsake the conventional or the secure for the sake of some vaster, better thing which can be had only at a price. There has never been a time when it has really cost more to venture everything for the sake of the ideals of Jesus Christ than in this morning of the twentieth century. I have not sought to apply these things to the region of faith, but here also the voice of God is sounding. In the great words of John Henry Newman, "Faith is a venture." We are always being asked to leave behind us the old forms in which we found God and to find Him in that which now touches and illumines our lives. He speaks to us in every accent of new-found truth, in the revelations of science, in the voices of our own prophets, and in the praises of our own psalmists. His voice breathes through our dreams and becomes articulate in the very travail of our restless, struggling, suffering world. He is asking us for our souls' sake and for the sake of our truer knowledge of Him, everywhere and always, to seek Him where He is today and not where He was yesterday; and for the sake of our faith itself to discern His presence in all the wind-swept seas across which the future calls us. Our comfortable and conventional lives are spiritually perilous, and it is only, as from generation to generation we forsake all lesser things or cast them into the crucible of some all-consuming cause, that civilization is reborn. There is adventure enough, daring enough, risk enough in Christian idealism, if we will but follow that to the end, to save us from all the numbing power of materialism, cowardice or shameful contentment.

We have only to challenge in the name of Christ and under the standard of his cross, whatever is cruel or selfish or mean in our world; and we shall find

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

ourselves committed to a campaign which has in it action enough for the most restless and risk enough for the most daring. Until we have come far nearer subduing our souls and our society to the spirit of Jesus than we have yet done, and while we are so far away from any realization of our dreams of a divine world as we are, and while we are so hard beset within and without by the foes of the spirit, we shall never want occasions for battle or need to lay our armour down. A human fellowship resolutely and bravely endeavoring to make justice and truth everywhere regnant, and to render human brotherhood something more than a bloodstained hope, sensitive to every suggestion of the spirit of God and discerning in the changing circumstances of life and the unfolding of the divine Providence through the massive sequences of history the old imperative, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you to the north," contains within itself the secret of a new rebirth. As long as the Son of God goes forth to war, those who follow in his train will have at once a captain and a cause great enough to keep them clear of every selfishness, to endue them with every high spiritual quality, to teach them the secret of sacrifice and make them rich in the wages of a holy courage.

Their adventure will be his opportunity, for it is in those who dare greatly that he is greatly reincarnate. Life offers but one of two alternatives — to sit by the slowly dying embers of burnt-out fires or to arise and follow the dawn.

"They sit at home and they dream and dally,  
Raking the embers of long-dead years —  
But ye go down to the haunted valley  
Light-hearted pioneers.  
They have forgotten they ever were young,  
They hear your songs as an unknown tongue,  
But the Flame of God through your spirit stirs,  
Adventurers — O Adventurers!"

## V

### THE MANIFOLD KINGSHIP OF JESUS<sup>1</sup>

*"And on his head were many crowns." — Revelation 19 : 12.*

This text lies at the heart of the most august apocalyptic vision in the New Testament. Heaven itself has opened and the armies of the Most High ride out to conquest. He that leads them is set upon a white horse; no man can number the hosts which follow him, and his coming is as the treading of the winepress of the Almighty. For the church today it is all a majestic symbolism told in words whose very repetition gives wealth to our mother tongue. For those to whom it was long ago addressed it was the literal hope of a deliverance for which they cried up to God. For us tonight it is an anticipation and proclamation of the manifold kingship of Jesus and his imperial destiny.

The persuasion of an imperial destiny has always lain at the very heart of Christianity. Jesus had hardly gathered about him a handful of men, fisherfolk and the like, unlearned and simple, before he sent them out to disciple the world. His disciples, while they were still the despised followers of a crucified leader, proclaimed to men of all races and faiths the supremacy of the Lord Christ. A divine compulsion carried the Apostle Paul across the narrow waters which divide Asia from Europe, to win Greece for his Master. Before he died he had already claimed Rome as the capital city of the

<sup>1</sup> A sermon preached at the annual meeting of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Toledo, 1916.

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

spiritual empire and looked with longing eyes, beginning to be blinded by the light of heavenly things, toward the far-off shores of Western Europe. In the travail of persecutions which threatened her very life the Church never for a moment surrendered her dreams of dominion; beyond all the overturning of temporal powers and the recasting of heaven and earth in the flaming purpose of God, she saw the universal lordship of Jesus Christ, and we are one in spirit and succession with all those who, from the very beginning, have claimed the world for their Master and have refused to rest until his empire should come true.

We may well meditate upon the deeper meaning of an imperial passion so long and so sacrificially held. Other religions have had their propaganda; there have been other missionaries than the missionaries of Jesus Christ, but for the most part their course has been soon run. The great religions of the East have largely ceased to struggle — Mohammedism alone maintains a propaganda which needs to be taken into account, — but Christianity has never been content. There has been as it were a "woe in the bones" of the disciples of Christ which will not let them rest while his empire remains incomplete. Today, though many high ardors to which the Church once answered have grown cold, the missionary passion burns with a flame which grows constantly more intense. Christianity itself has not understood the motives which have driven it to this ceaseless widening of its bounds. They are of its very life, instinctive, persuasive, unescapable. What is the secret of such impulses, in what is their justification to be sought? Surely in nothing less than the essential universality of our faith and in such fitness of Jesus Christ for world dominion as makes his completed empire the very



## THE MANIFOLD KINGSHIP OF JESUS

necessity of human well-being — and in the longing of men for an imperial citizenship.

For we are always seeking some empire or other, we children of time and clay. Nothing has so mastered the human imagination as the dream of wide dominion. The very words by which we name it carry their own vast and awe-inspiring suggestion — “Emperor”; “Empire”; “Imperial.” How they lift themselves against all the horizon of the commonplace. There is something within us which answers to their very repetition as sleeping soldiers answer to the trumpet’s call. We were not made for petty dominion. We instinctively demand an imperial obedience for the standard which we love; an imperial administration for the Leader whom we follow; an imperial expression for our hopes and our desires; all this is as old as time and what it means in human history does not need to be re-told. But it is also true that there are forces in history against which every dream of empire has hitherto broken itself as the sea upon a rocky coast; pride of race and love of liberty and rich national conscientiousness, and honest human wrath against those who would drive us down their own roads with no regard to our own loyalties or longings, have always in the end proven mightier than the ambition of kings or the strategy of warriors, or the wealth of dominant races. The end of all imperial ambition has hitherto been written in the dust, and what has been will be again; and yet so unconquerable is that paradoxical passion for empire in us who will not abide the administrations our own ambitions create, that always after a little interval the passion for world dominion has gathered itself together anew, found a state in which to incarnate itself and a sword with which to fight and gone out once more to drench the earth with blood.

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

Here is the profoundest contradiction of history. We can neither abide empire nor live without it, and today these latent antagonisms are at war in earth and sky and sea—even in our own souls. Is this always to be our fate? Must civilization endlessly undo itself at the bidding of two forces without which we can never rest content and which we cannot reconcile? Yes, unless there is another empire than the empire of the sword, and another Lordship than the Lordship of the Czar or Kaiser or King. It is here—here that the Lord of the pierced hands stands in the very heart of the storm, offering us deliverance from ourselves. There are two rival Imperialisms in the world today, as always. The lamb and the beast, Christ and Mars, the “Man on Horseback” and the Man on the Cross. They are strangely rooted in a common soil, these contending empires; in the tendency of every great force to work out to the furthest limit, in our own longing for unity and coherence wide as life and humanity, in the very greatness of the soul itself, but they are more remote than the poles in what they bring us. The one, Imperialism, ruins itself and its subjects. The other blesses whatever it touches. The one is red with blood, the other white with holiness; the one hot with hate, the other aflame with love. We stand at the forks of the road; which shall it be,—the “man on horseback” or the “man on the cross”? For us tonight there is but one answer. The one empire that can save a discordant world is the empire of Christian brotherhood.

Here then is the first secret of the manifold kingship of Jesus Christ. Because Christianity aspires to be universal and answers in such aspiration to deathless qualities of the soul, and because, on the other hand, it has a leader whose empire is benediction, whose domin-



## THE MANIFOLD KINGSHIP OF JESUS

ion is life and redemption and in whose bonds we are most truly free in the measure that we are most utterly bound, Christianity and Jesus Christ satisfy these deep longings of ours for fellowships wide as humanity and for the universal supremacy of what we most deeply believe and devoutly love, yet without ever saddening a single soul or clouding a sacred hope or costing a child's tear.

Here is what above all this weary, warring world of ours needs most clearly to see. Before our social restlessnesses work themselves out into peace we must find something which is big enough to master and make brethren of us all. We cannot dwell in a world which wants some kind of union, some all-pervading coherence; there are great human forces which will run toward that as irresistibly as the tides run out to the sea; and we shall never secure this by the imposition of any merely human will—whether single or collective—upon the wills of others. The ruins of every empire, from Assyria and Thebes until today, bear testimony to that. The jackals which prowl and the night-birds which cry about the desolations where once the rulers of Nineveh and Babylon built their palaces are but the elder voices of time, testifying to the futility of any force which does not set up its capital city in the hearts of men and reign in their loving obedience. If the multitude of those who fought and suffered and died in the endeavor to realize these deep instincts of ours for empire, in wrong and forbidden ways, could somehow sweep by us in endless and shadowy procession, those hosts of the lost which Dante saw driven down the winds of the Inferno would be, compared with them, only as the shadow of a leaf against the shadow of a cloud. Jesus Christ alone offers the world an empire in which the

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

longings for unity may be richly satisfied and its longings for individuality equally respected. Nothing else can do this; the only possible unity is a spiritual unity, the only force great enough to command all men is Christianity; the only program inclusive enough to give all men and nations a place in the sun and yet to make them something greater than themselves is the program of Jesus Christ.

*The first crown*, then, which the seer saw upon His head who rides out "conquering and to conquer" is the crown of an imperial ideal which will satisfy our longings for unity without stifling liberty, and empower without destroying what is most divinely distinctive in humanity: the Kingdom of God is the only kingdom which has any divine right in God's world, and Jesus Christ is the only King who may reign by divine decree.

*The second* of the many crowns on the head of Jesus is the crown of an imperial method. There are two ways of winning lordship. There is really but one true way, though there is another way which has deceived us, mocking the very hopes which it promises to fulfil. Force imposes, but love evokes. The best that force can do is for a little while to rule through fear or hopelessness. At the best, force is a substitute for finer agencies; at the worst, it dulls or deadens all better things. Force may hinder the wrongdoer, as iron bars may shut him away from society, but force can never reform him or solve the real ethical and social problem which he offers. Force may, upon occasion, compel an unwilling nation to accept the will of another nation; but if that will be just and right it would in the end have prevailed through its own justice and rightness, and that at vastly smaller cost. The show of force may warn a predatory people that the price of some greedy

## THE MANIFOLD KINGSHIP OF JESUS

enterprise will be too great to make up for its possible gains. Force may drive a tiger-nation back to its lair, but force can never change the tiger heart.

Beyond this, force does not and cannot act. It cheats us; we are always using it because we will not take the pains nor pay the price of bringing into action the true healing and transforming forces. Force often overlies and constantly hinders the exercise of the truer, better things. Empire cannot be secured by force — or, if secured, it cannot be maintained. The blood of the conquered is a poor cement, and sooner or later a thousand latent resistances will in turn forge swords and mobilize armies and beat their blind master into the dust. Listen to Napoleon from the rock of St. Helena — and who should know better than he? — “Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne and myself founded great empires; upon what did the creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for him.”

The true imperial forces are love and justice and fair dealing, patient discipline, education, brave trust and saving passion — these are the methods of Jesus Christ. He sought no unwilling disciples; He has never laid any coercion but love upon a single human soul. He wins men by meeting their abiding needs, by shining into their lives in the light of truth, by giving them new causes to serve, new ends to seek and new values to enthrone. He was all patience and gentleness with whomsoever gave him as much as the shadow of an opportunity to reach and change their hearts. He cast his wisdom abroad as the sower sows the seed in the hope that some seed might fall in good soil; and once he had set up his empire thus established in a single life, the gates of hell were powerless against him. He be-

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

queathed to his disciples the methods which he himself followed, and though the Church has too often forgotten the blessed example of her Lord, she has never been so strong as when she fought with his weapons or so weak as when she cast them aside and took instead the weapons of the world. She has never really won or kept anything save in his spirit and with his appointed weapons.

Jesus Christ wears another crown — *the Conquering Crown of the cross*. It is no easy thing to establish the Kingdom of God. Christ and his disciples were from the first committed to warfare. He Himself said that he “came not to bring peace but a sword.” Any great ideal which has to make its way in a world like ours must win every square foot of the territory which it occupies in the face of opposition, compared with which the conquest of Verdun is but the easy occupation of a summer afternoon. Prejudice, deeply-rooted conservatism, vested interests, half truths, sloths and selfishness, and all the evil qualities of the soul, oppose all better things. These are strong beyond calculation. They are rich in resource, stubborn in defence, unscrupulous in method, and upon occasion bitterly cruel. They change their faces and their flags at need; they disguise themselves in garments of goodness and seek to use for their own defence the weapons of righteousness and order.

The longer one lives, the more clearly one comes to understand that the really hard thing in the world is to change human attitudes and re-cast the soul. It is easier to join the seas together and pierce mountain ranges and conquer earth and air, than to prevail over the human spirit armed against the high cause of the ideal. “We wrestle not,” says the apostle, “against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against

## THE MANIFOLD KINGSHIP OF JESUS

powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places — wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God." Only truth is strong enough to defeat a lie; goodness alone is great enough to subdue evil; humility is the only foe which pride really needs to dread, and patience the one defiance in the face of which the hard and arbitrary are helpless.

It is with such weapons as these that Christ and those who follow him ride out to conquest. They do not, to begin with, greatly trouble those who oppose them. They seem too insubstantial, too easy to turn against those who use them. They do not in the beginning of the fight wound the adversary in any mortal spot or greatly pain him, even though they pierce his armour; nay, by a divine contradiction, they wound soonest those who bear them. There is no battle without wounds; but in the Christian warfare the soldier of Christ has first to suffer. There is no suffering beneath the stars like the suffering of goodness thwarted in its holy purposes; of patience seeing no travail of her soul wherein to be satisfied, or of love yearning after those who will not heed, and yearning in vain. Those who would advance the ideals of Jesus by the methods of Jesus, in the face of the foes of his kingdom and of his spirit must count upon such suffering as this; it will be as if their weapons turned in their hands and they themselves felt first their edge.

This is the first falling of the shadow of the cross at the feet of those who seek the ideals of God; it is a kind of inner and hidden crucifixion; but it is none the less real and the pain of it is a part of the cost of a better world. Nay, more than that, the adversaries, thinking themselves unwounded, find opportunity to use their own weapons; they meet patience with pride,

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

long-suffering with disdain, holy aspiration with mockery, true teaching with denial, and love with unconcern. They do more than that. They grow impatient of being so assailed and undertake once and for all to end the strife. They use force and persecution. They reach for the hammer and the nails; they plant the cross and begin to weave a crown of thorns. "We will silence," they say, "these lips which will not let us be, we will drive the nails through these hands which seek to lead us up unwelcome paths; we will drive our spears through hearts whose love we will not own," and because those who are subject to such counter attack have no weapons but the weapons of the spirit, they have no resource but to suffer and be silent. But in all this there are hidden powers which presently begin to make themselves manifest. Those who wage warfare against patience, gentleness, love and justice discover that though they have silenced the prophets, the word is still proclaimed; and although they have nailed loving hands to the cross, other hands reach out to bless them; and though they have pierced the very heart of the Son of God, he rises deathless from the tomb.

There is no weapon in the world like the weapon of suffering love; and though it does not immediately have its way with men, nothing else is in the end so sure to prevail. Suffering love breaks down stubborn defence and melts hard hearts, and softens hostile wills, wakes the slumbering conscience, rouses the sleeping better self, touches with a great and moving awe those who came to scoff until they confess even at the foot of the cross they themselves have planted, "Truly this was the Son of God." In the end patience and love and justice and spiritual passion and high desire for the happiness of others, prove themselves the very weapons of God,



## THE MANIFOLD KINGSHIP OF JESUS

winning their way in triumph across every hard, contested field. Such forces as these, reinforced by the willingness of those who wield them to suffer and die if need be, cannot be withstood; the eternal years of God are theirs, and though they be long in coming to their own, yet they come to their own at last.

If Christianity is to prevail, it will not prevail through its wealth or its organization or its efficiency or its dependence upon lesser forces, or any such thing; but simply because the followers of Jesus Christ, baptised into his spirit, possessed by his temper, committed to his ideals, and fighting with his weapons, have at any cost to themselves held fast to that which he has committed unto them, until the great Christian qualities have had their way with men and have possessed and transformed them.

Now in these three, in an Imperial Ideal, an Imperial Method and an Imperial Force, the Empire of Christ is secured. There is much to be said here, of course, for which there is no time and in this instance no occasion. I have gathered up under one heading—an Imperial Ideal—the whole content of the gospel. It is more than an ideal; it is life, and love and redemption. Our hope of the universal lordship of Jesus Christ would be but the baseless figment of a vision, did he not hold in his pierced hands all that men may rightly desire, and were it not true also that the by-products of the gospel—its outcome in life and society, that is—are rich in every kind of social and industrial and political betterment. There is also the mystic wonder of Christ himself in whose service we are made free, in whose comradeship we are made glad, in whose face we see the glory of God and in whose sacrificial love we are redeemed. Given a gospel like this, and so true a method

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

by which to spread it, and so unconquerable a force by which to further it, and the end is not in doubt. What was long ago foreseen will become the record of history and the many crowns of the apocalyptic vision be made blessedly real in the Christianization of the world.

There is no better illustration of all this than the missionary enterprise, in the service of which we are gathered here tonight. More splendidly than anything else which she has ever undertaken, the missionary enterprise of the Christian Church has revealed the manifold kingship of Jesus Christ and witnessed to his triple power. We have been for the most part purged from selfishness in undertaking it; it is born of the purest motives of which the Church is capable. There is no element of gain in it or any self-advancement. It is a labor of love undertaken in a pure spiritual passion and out of a Christlike concern for the souls of those whose souls we seek.

More than that, through the very circumstances of missionary work we have been compelled to follow the pure methods of the gospel; we have sent our missionaries as sheep to the slaughter, armed with nothing but love and patience and holy desire and a passion for the Kingdom. They have had to win their way by winning the hearts of those they served. We have not cared greatly for statistics or demanded immediate results; we have been quite willing that men and women should spend their lives without a single convert, for we have known how great the enterprise is to which they have been committed. We have not used force or any kind of violence, nor been at all in haste. We have let the Spirit of Jesus work as he himself would have it work in all the world, nor have we feared the cost; we have counted the cost beforehand and known that so



## THE MANIFOLD KINGSHIP OF JESUS

great an empire could not be won without much pain and loss; but we ourselves have borne the pain and suffering and loss, and therefore, while at home the Church has too often feared and doubted and been afraid to suffer, and has again and again well-nigh lost her life because she would not lose it, on missionary fields the Church in braver and more Christlike passion has won the only resplendent victory which she has won since the days of the Reformation. I would not test Christianity tonight by much that we are doing in Christian lands; I would test it by its missionary passion and missionary triumphs. The lessons which we ought to learn are across the sea, and if only the spirit of the missionary church may return as a tide upon the Church at home we may then rewrite the history of the world in a single generation.

More than that, the missionary church is teaching us the truest secret of Christian unity and the true secret of the brotherhood of the nations. The strongest bonds which have been woven between alien peoples in the last one hundred years have been woven by the missionaries of the cross. It is not diplomacy nor any kind of statecraft, nor any wisdom of our administrators, which holds America and Japan together tonight. It is the work of the Christian missionary, and though there are forces in America striving with a blind fatuity which we cannot rightly characterize, to undo what they have done, still the blessed bonds of the Cross of Christ hold fast, and if there is to be any peace between us and them it will have to be, when the accounts of history are cast up, the accomplishments of the missionary Church. What real bonds there are between China and any other people are such bonds as have been established in the service of Jesus Christ. Here is our true defence against

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

any peril — yellow, brown or white. A hard and materialistic civilization has too often come in behind the missionary, unraveling what he has woven and leaving the mark of the mailed fist in place of the print of the pierced hand; but even so, what true forces there are even now in action to secure the spiritual unity of our dissevered world are the incarnation in some form or other of the spirit of Jesus.

The labor of the missionary constitutes such a story as must kindle every heart — rich in sacrifice, wondrous in heroism, splendid in patience, shining in love. If there be any one who fears that Christianity will rob the soul of daring, let him read the missionary annals of the Christian Church and forget his fear. If there are those who seek for our material age a new and heroic expression, let them be taught of the missionaries of the cross, then let them turn to their own cities, states and firesides and discover everywhere such opportunities for the expression of the spirit of Christ as shall make us all blood kin in the splendor of a shining devotion to an imperial cause — and we are only upon the threshold of it all.

Twice I have climbed to those high shoulders of the Central Alps where the roads which you follow bring you to the very edge of the Rhone glacier and to the sources of those rivers which seek the Mediterranean. Once I came there at the end of a long day's tramp, when the clouds which had been slowly gathering for twenty-four hours finally settled down upon the mountains. I heard the voices of the waters but did not see them. I saw the beginnings of mountain snows but no white and lonely splendor. It was at best a broken and shadowed world of hopes and prophecies; all things were lost and darkened by the clouds. Again I came by the

## THE MANIFOLD KINGSHIP OF JESUS

same road at the end of a day when a cloudless dawn had moved through light to a sunset unobscured by a single breath of mist, and there, all which had been before lost in clouds and deepening shadows stood in such glory as he must have seen who saw the gold and ivory walls of the New Jerusalem. Every snow-clad mountain was an altar and the very shining of their summits a white and moving glory. I watched while the day died away and the stars came out and the quiet hours of the night moved on; and always, always there lay upon those high summits an unfading light. Before the afterglow of the evening had darkened and withdrawn, the light of another day borne upon the wings of the morning possessed anew those heights, from which I learned in a night's vigil the meaning of the ancient proclamation — "There shall be no night there."

Our hope of the Kingdom is like that. It is overlaid by clouds and much obscured by fear and folly. We see, here and there, but brokenly the lesser summits; the far prophetic slopes are lost in darkness. But the clouds will clear away — and where we now see but broken contours we shall see the shining table-lands of God; where now we see but broken hopes our children's children shall discover divine fulfilment; where now the Empire of Christ is but an anticipation it shall some day be made perfect, and in his spirit shall these human fellowships of ours be lifted, please God, so high that the holy lights of the enduring spiritual order shall fall upon them forever, undarkened. For in the Kingship of Jesus Christ the temporal and eternal have their holy meeting place, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

## VI

### THE WINNING OF A SOUL

*"In your patience ye shall win your souls." — Luke 21 : 19.*

Are souls then really won? Is not the soul beyond our power either to create or to destroy? What differences of station, wisdom, grace or power are for a moment to be considered alongside this elemental thing which escapes our definitions, lifts us above the clay, and which is indeed not something we possess, but rather just what makes us what we are? Have not our souls been won for us through such creative travail of the spirit of God, as we do but dimly guess? To talk of winning a soul, then, is as idle as to speak of the sightless winning sight, or the lifeless winning life. If it be not ours, nay, if it be not us to begin with, how shall we ever come to possess it? To such conclusions as these our accepted thought about the soul inevitably brings us.

But we have other, freer uses of the word "soul," which give us pause. We say upon occasion that a man has no soul at all; soulless is one of our well-worn adjectives. In our hasty judgments we condemn our fellows as possessing little, or mean, or crippled souls. The Master tells us that to gain the whole world and lose one's own soul is to have worse than lived in vain. And finally, in this passage here, spoken for the guidance of a handful of sorely tried men about to pass as heralds of the kingdom through searching experiences, Jesus Christ says that the greatest outcome of Christian dis-

## THE WINNING OF A SOUL

ciplship, steadfastly pursued through many difficulties, is the winning of a soul, and we may not easily deny his right to speak with authority. Moreover, a thorough examination of the uses of the word "soul" in the New Testament — such as a scholar like Cremer, for example, has conducted — does not justify us in concluding that we have neither responsibility in the administration of our souls nor power to win them. Soul is a vast and plastic word, standing for a vast and plastic reality. It is true that our souls are God's gifts to us, born of the breath of His spirit upon the clay, secured for us through the mystic continuities of inheritance; but it is equally true that the soul is, in its beginnings at least, but the prophecy of personality. It may become a thousand things. This is the wonder of the soul. The chemist in his laboratory alters the very form and constitution of matter; the physicist transforms a lump of coal into the white brilliancy of an incandescent light; but such changes as these are not to be compared with the transmutation of a soul as it unfolds in great and glowing qualities or withers into seared nothingness on the tragic slopes of sin and shame. Here is the open secret of any contradictory thought about our souls, and here is the true indication of what it means to win them. We win our souls as we fulfill their better prophecies, carry to full completion their plastic possibilities and fill in the dim anticipations of personality with the rich grace of perfect manhood and womanhood.

There is nothing in any lily bulb, brown, shriveled and earth-stained, to suggest the deep-cupped calyx whose waxen stainlessness even the dewes seem to tarnish, and yet there is nothing which we have the right to say of the lily which we cannot say of the bulb. The lily is actually there. Any man who fails to conceive the

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

bulb in terms of the fullgrown lily makes the saddest of mistakes, but the man who pretends to find in the bulb itself all the qualities of the fullblown flower is equally blind. One says: "This thing is brown and shriveled and dead. I cannot understand your joy in it; it means nothing to me." The other says: "Here is perfect beauty, fragrance, stainlessness. You are blind if you cannot see it." Both of them are right, both are wrong. The bulb is the possibility of beauty, the prophecy of stainlessness, the hope and expectation of the blossom's waxen wonder, but only the gardener knows what culture and care, what ministration of earth and sky are needed before that hope is fulfilled.

The soul is like that. As far as it is the full, rich possibility of personality, as far as it makes us what we are, nay, as far as I am my soul and my soul is I, it is God's gift to me, and I may not win it. But in so far as my soul—my true soul—is nothing less than what I in the end may become through the manifold discipline and experience of life, then I may not only win a soul, but I shall never have a soul unless I do win it, and the failure to win it will involve in a common sterility all the enterprises of life. The soul is at once a possession and an achievement, and we are never for a moment to allow the greatness of what we possess to blind us to those obligations of spiritual husbandry which alone can give meaning to what we possess.

How then do we win our souls? How are we to take these forms and prophecies of spiritual wealth and give them such reality as make the soul, not only the prophecy of what we may become, but the radiant record of what we have achieved, and the deathless manifestation of what we are. It is hard to choose the

## THE WINNING OF A SOUL

right illustration, for there are so many, but let us think, for example, of what it means to win a soul in the world of music.

I. We bring, to begin with, to such a task as that, capacities already created for us, and wrought into the very stuff of our personality. We have hidden depths of being which answer to rhythmic and harmonic suggestion as the sea answers to the rising wind. The soul itself is a kind of instrument to be played upon. There are correspondences between nobly ordered sound and the hushed quietudes of the spirit, whose beginnings lie deeper than we dream. But all this never becomes real unless we deal with it, discipline and perfect it. We win a soul for music only as we give music a chance with the soul, surrender ourselves to it, wait upon it as a disciple waits upon a master. Then its vibrant strings cry aloud for us our ecstasies, its trumpets voice our triumphs. It spreads abroad in our perturbed souls its vast and healing power. It prays for us and sobs for us and breaks down for us limitations of time and space, and like some tide come in from other and diviner regions bears us back, as we surrender ourselves to it, to its own far and hidden sanctuaries. It becomes the manifold articulation of our memories or our desires, voicing what would otherwise be unspeakable, and in an universal language. So Alfred Noyes hears a barrel-organ above the hoarse and weary voice of London, and straightway for him, and for all who hear, other voices call and a new glory shines through the dust, and a thousand memories stir, and a new light comes into tired eyes, and —

“A hundred thousand feet  
Are marching on to glory through the poppies and the wheat  
In the land where the dead dreams go.”



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

So Wordsworth hears the voice of a Scotch girl across the highland slopes and knows the magic —

“Of old, unhappy far-off things,  
And battles long ago.”

So John Zundel, Henry Ward Beecher's organist, told Beecher that he could neither speak right nor devoutly pray save with the organ keys beneath his fingers. Then the organ became the instrument of what he otherwise vainly struggled to express, and voiced his spiritual passion through its vast and hidden articulations.

As we pass from region to region of musical relationships in such ways as these, we begin to find meanings in forms of musical expression which aforetime we scorned. We are not content with the simply melodic; we glory in intricate and embroidered harmonics, in vast themes shaped and reshaped by the genius of a Handel, a Wagner or a Beethoven. We rejoice in moving motives, half concealed and half revealed. We come presently to see that the men who have been able to hear in the silences a music still unsung, to discern the proper instruments for its manifold expression, and so to gather together and direct great orchestras that the fragmentary is made symphonic and dissonances are welded into majestic agreements, and rapturous tides rise and fall, now beating like the sea against rock-bound coasts and now hushed into half-heard whispers, belong to the lonely fellowship of supreme genius. So we gain a new world, and that new world on the other hand gains a new citizen. What was once unreal and impossible has become to us blessedly real, the high source of holy gladness, a spring of unfailing strength and a nobly creative force in the development of personality itself.



## THE WINNING OF A SOUL

A city which is full of music lovers is by that very fact a better city in which to live, for the lovers of music are the creators of music, and about them and summoned by them, orchestras are built and supported, singers gathered together and wholesome joy and spiritual gains made possible. All this becomes in the end very concrete. It means that changed men are living in a changed world, full of activities, realities, relationships which would never for a moment have been possible had they not won a soul for music and in so winning their soul changed not only themselves, but the world of which they are a part.

What is true of music is true of books, of beauty, of goodness, comradeship and the love of God. We send our boys and girls to school, we teach them how to read and write and think, and for what? That they may win a soul for literature, become comrades of the poets, kindle with the prophet's passion, recapitulate the past with the historian, meditate with the essayist and live with the novelist and the dramatist in worlds of veracious insight and imagination. The classic and the hallowed thus become their welcome guests. Shakespeare's men and women declare to them the tragedy of irresolution, or lawless ambition, or jealousy, or scorn—or better still, the rewards of steadfastness and the unfailing fruitions of love. They have a thousand friends whom the seers of visions have called out of the unseen for their warning, their comfort or their joy. They come into an immeasurably increased body of spiritual possession, and even as they become citizens of the world of books, the world of books is made rich by a new inhabitant; for just as a soul for music expresses itself in inner and outer relationships, so a soul for books not only enlarges the life of him who wins it,

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

but challenges the creative power of those who minister to it, and so a real world is created which in the end enriches and enlarges our intellectual birthright —

“ A real world, both strong and good,  
Round which with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,  
Our pleasures and our pastimes grow.”

These are only outposts of the territories which the soul is meant to occupy, but they do at least illustrate a great truth which, beginning in all sorts of simple and almost unimportant ways, finally manifests itself in the supreme unfoldings of life; for the whole task of life is to find new worlds which these souls of ours may possess, and to furnish to the manifold realm of the Spirit new citizens. We begin with a self which eats and sleeps, and wakes and cries, and smiles a bit and sleeps again. We go on to the creation of selves to whom the world of love and goodness, truth and beauty, becomes increasingly meaningful, and in whom such qualities become real. We live in the light which shines in the eyes about us, we are made rich in affection, we extend our friendships, we dimly discern great imperatives of right and wrong, we establish their thrones in our souls. And through all this we discern the manifestation of a presence still more deeply interfused. In the practice of the presence of God, the Unseen and Eternal becomes more real to us than all the little passing show of time and sense. Reverence sets up its altars in our souls, devotion hallows our prayers and wings aloft our songs of praise. God comes to us in intimate communions, manifests His indwelling power in our strength and our steadfastness. Character tested by temptation, vindicated in victory, made strong in vision, great in gentleness and beautiful in love, ripens like heavenly fruit upon the Tree of Life. All the better

## THE WINNING OF A SOUL

part of our personality is established and enlarged. We are rich in an inner secret wealth. We are richer still as we share our wealth with all our brethren. We know ourselves to be a part of all that is and yet we know ourselves to be *apart* from all that is. We begin to feel dimly that our true life does not depend upon any transient earth-born condition, but that more and more we are being detached from the incidental and related to the unchanging.

II. Now all this is a fruit of a steadfast patience. Such development as this is no light achievement; it is the whole outcome of whatever life brings to us, and all that we ourselves bring to life. We shall achieve it only as we highly resolve by the grace of God to make whatever befalls us tributary to our true spiritual wealth. We may carry away from every battle-field, as our most precious spoil, a glorious courage and a dauntless steadfastness, we may through the magic of patience win from our disappointment a gracious serenity. Tenderness so becomes the fruit of tears and sorrows, and triumphant trust issues out of problems unsolved, heights unscaled, and the long following of difficult and shadowed paths. We come presently to the place where we see that nothing less than the whole full force of experience is great enough to make a fully ordered soul. Just as every harvest field is somehow the expression of all the seasons with their wind and rain, and amplitudes of summer light and hard-bound winter bitterness, and manifold ministries of earth and sky through every changing day, so the soul is the fruit of life and nothing else. If it is to be made perfect, there is nothing we can spare.

We have indeed the promise of a day when pain shall be no more, but the premature dismissal of pain

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

would be the impoverishment of the soul. God will some day wipe away all tears, but a tearless world would be strangely sterile in tremulous tenderness and healing sympathies. It is only when we have begun to gather up these fuller meanings of our experiences that we discern the worth of the more difficult and searching, but in the end we see the light. We know that —

“Life is not an idle ore,  
But iron dug from central gloom,  
And heated hot with burning fears,  
And dipped in baths of hissing tears,  
And battered with the shock of doom.”

III. We win our souls, not only through the full spiritual utilization of the whole experience of life, but also, through a kind of divine contradiction, only as we are not too much concerned about them. There is a kind of holy indirectness about getting a soul. If a man would win a soul, says Jesus, let him be willing to lose it, — let him lose himself, that is, in tasks and fidelities and redemptive unselfishnesses. All the worldly business of life is spiritually fruitful, we have only to address ourselves to it in a noble and reverent temper to discern that. Every great occupation is twice creative. If we are concerned with love and justice and goodness, with the dominion of truth, with the enthronement of beauty, if we seek for others what we pray for ourselves, and are willing ourselves to be impoverished if only they may become rich, if we test every outcome of the day's work by its contribution of well-being to a weary and troubled world, if we make truth our day star, rejoice in beauty and seek to spread abroad its transforming power, if love be established as the one continuing and all-inclusive temper, if goodness be set upon a throne so high that her scepter is over all our works, if faith guides us and hope calls us from

## THE WINNING OF A SOUL

height to height, — and if we do this day in and day out as God calls us through the changing years, we shall in steadfastness win our souls.

IV. There is yet one other condition, or group of conditions, which is supreme. We need definition, redemption, re-enforcement: — definition, because without a pattern we are likely to go sadly astray, redemption, because we have so sadly gone astray, re-enforcement, because we cannot prevail in our own strength alone. How shall we choose the true self out of all the manifold selves which seek fulfilment if no God-given definition of true spiritual worth is vouchsafed us? There are a thousand bypaths along this Pilgrim's Progress way of ours, and at each bypath stands a partial, possible self, and each possible self says: "Come, I am what you are meant to be. You will find joy in my occupations, content in my fellowships, wealth in the search after my treasures."

Sometimes the path down which they invite us leads to the abyss, sometimes the road which they advise ends nowhere, leaving us all weary and astray ere the day is well begun. Sometimes these guides can offer no better goal than Doubting Castle, no better comradeship than Giant Despair. Oftener still they urge us to some partial good, some little accomplishment, so wholly inadequate that when we have gained what they offer, we are still poor, and when we have entered into their pitiful peace we are still restless. There is only one road and one guide which a man ought to follow, and the guide himself is both guide and road and Saviour.

It would be desperately unjust in the face of what men have done and been, who have never known or followed him, to say that outside his discipleship there

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

is no true spiritual life. Every great religion has borne fruit in fidelities, devotions and gentlenesses. Other faiths have had their calendared saints, and those who never knew his name, following some gleam of that light which lighteth every man who cometh into the world, have manifested true spiritual qualities, but as compared with the spiritual fruitions of Christianity how poor they have been! The vast secret of it escapes analysis, but there is nothing so wholly beyond debate as that in Jesus Christ a new spiritual quality came into the world, and that from the first those who have loved and served and followed him have won such souls as have given a new meaning to every ancient spiritual quality, a new perfection to every virtue. His gospel meets our every need, its great assurances of forgiveness give us heart to try again, its manifestations of redemption pluck men as brands from the burning, lift them up from the miry clay and set their feet upon the rock. And somehow, in and through it all, there is secured a kind of spiritual overplus, a fulness of spiritual development, warmth and tenderness and wealth of love and goodness which are the continuations in our little broken lives, of his divine perfection, the reincarnation of himself.

V. Given then Christ and his Cross, and the assurance of God's fatherhood which lives in them and shines through them, given the possibilities and prophecies of each time-born self, given life with its tasks, its battles, its unfoldings, its transforming experiences, given this world of ours, as the stage of our pilgrimage, given ministrant days and loving comradeships and truth and beauty, music by which to march, and the Dayspring from on high across the hills of time, and in our steadfastness we shall win our souls. This is what life and



## THE WINNING OF A SOUL

time are for. If this world of ours were meant for joy alone, its conditions are hard to justify; if it were meant for petty success it is not worth the cost; if it were meant for smug well-being it would better never have been created; but if it be meant for a place in which to win a soul, — then whatever worlds, tethered to other suns, are lost in far-flung constellations, ours is the peer of them all.

The proof of this is not far to seek. We have all seen it again and again in the lives of the strong and good. We have seen the noble fruition of their lives, we have seen them build their visions in stable forms, make their spiritual passion manifest in a better, braver world, and through their unselfishness open doors of light and hope to the weary and heavy laden. We have seen them as those who have here no abiding place, testify to an heavenly citizenship. We have seen them make ready without fear or doubt for the last, long journey, we have seen them pass through the shadow as those assured of ulterior and undying light, and when at last they have left us we have heard —

“ As from beyond the limit of the world,  
Like the last echo born of a great cry,  
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice,  
Around a king returning from his wars.”

Any earth upon which such as these walk is consecrated by their touch, and any journey at the end of which they come into such manhood and womanhood is justified in the counsels of the Eternal. I care not what earth's tears and cries and battles are, if out of it all men win their souls, serenely face the sunsets of time with eyes which see beyond our little brooding shadows the morning of an ampler day, and come down to the edge of dividing waters rich in graces of

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

the Spirit fit to make them citizens of any world of love and truth and beauty, and richer still in what treasures they have left behind in the souls of others. In such consummations as these our little world has served its divinely foreordained purpose, and God may crush it, if He will, into dust again, and scatter it abroad through azure spaces, as a sower casts his seed, for new eonian growths: and none may question this divine economy, for in the souls of such as these He has already gathered an imperishable harvest.



## VII

### THE TIDES OF THE SPIRIT

*"And after he had sent the multitudes away he went up into the mountain apart to pray."—Matthew 14:23.*

This revealing sentence is a kind of interlude in a narrative rich in almost every aspect of the ministry of Jesus. The chapter begins with the story of the tragic death of John the Baptist, beheaded in prison at a woman's caprice, a martyr to supreme moral steadfastness, and goes on to tell us how Jesus, upon the news of John's death, withdrew to a desert place and how the multitudes followed him there on foot from the cities; how he taught them and healed them and fed them and poured out himself for them in an endless fulness of love. All that life may ask of action, compassion or service he offered; and then because there was a great need upon him of rest and re-empowerment he sent the multitudes away, dismissed his disciples and sought the solitude of the mountain where he might be alone with God.

Even he who had such secret communion with his Father God as no one else has ever had, and spoke and loved and served out of a divine fulness of power, needed from time to time to re-collect his soul and gather back unto himself again from his Father what he had spent in making manifest the Father's love. It is as if for a moment the veil were lifted and we were permitted to share the secret of Jesus. He fitted himself for endless and exhaustless activities by lonely vigils and secret

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

prayer. His holy power flowed down from mountain heights of divine communion. It is always so. No one lives greatly who does not live out of great communions. No one has power with man who does not first of all prevail with God. Jesus Christ in this, as in all else, reveals in a supreme and luminous way the laws and conditions of all triumphant life.

For life, as James Martineau once said, in a sermon to which this sermon is much in debt, like the sea, has its ebbing and flowing tides. Periodicity is the law of all life and growth, the pulse-beat of the power, the spirit of God in His universe. Day and night, summer and winter, growth and decay, aye, and life and death itself, are but the rhythmic alternation of a power which acts only to rest, and rests only to act again. We ourselves are subject to the same law. Alternating functions are the very basis of all physical life. Breathing is a rhythm in answer to which the healing tides of the air touch the life current with their quickening power and bear away what clogs and burdens it. The rhythm of the heart is attuned to the rhythm of respiration; pulse-beat by pulse-beat the current of life flows on, and if it be interrupted only for an instant what is broken can never be made whole again. There are ebbing and flowing tides of vitality. Once in the 24 hours our physical forces are at the highest; once in the 24 hours they are at the ebb — usually just before dawn. It is more than likely that there are other cycles of ebbing and flowing power, more difficult to trace but none the less real. If we observed ourselves carefully we should probably find once in the week a peak of power up to which the whole week leads us. Recent tabulations of human efficiency gathered from the records of factories paying by piece work show a rhythm extending through the

## THE TIDES OF THE SPIRIT

year. May and October are the peak seasons in our northern climate; midsummer and midwinter points of vital depression. So we keep time with the very seasons and our strength ebbs and flows in answer to the changing stations of the earth itself.

Mental capacity is subject to the same alternation. It rises and falls periodically and there is a point beyond which it cannot be forced. Then the mind begins to yield under the strain put upon it and we lose command over our mental resources. It is as if the batteries having been discharged demanded time and opportunity for re-accumulation of energy. We have only to study the working of our own minds to come upon the laws by which we are individually governed; after we have discovered them we disobey them at our peril. Henry Ward Beecher could not maintain great mental activity for more than two hours at a time. No matter what he was doing — whether speaking, writing, or visiting with his friends — the end of the two-hour period was marked by such lassitude and weariness as to make it often necessary for him to excuse himself and retire for rest.

The soul also has its tidal laws. They are more subtle and have beyond doubt a vaster movement, but they are not unrelated to all we have been considering. We discern in ourselves alternations of moral force. There are seasons when temptations find us as it were disarmed, and when we surrender to some "drive" which in our stronger moments we could easily repulse. I suspect if we took minute and long-continued account of our souls we should find a periodic return of impatience, fretfulness, anger or unworthy desire, a periodic relaxation of conscience and self-control, and should discover on the other hand seasons in which we live

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

in a strong and self-contained spiritual serenity, adequate to all our duties, patient, generous, self-restrained and master of the lower, meaner forces which besiege our moral integrity.

Nay, I think beyond and above all this there are tides of communion with God. We have our seasons of faith and certainty — then God seems very real and very near to us. Prayer is a glad and fruitful exercise of the soul, and we discern beyond all lesser things the Divine Presence and hear above all other voices the music of the Heavenly voice. There are other seasons when we are touched by what the mystic calls the “black night of the soul.” We are much oppressed by doubt and our certainties are clouded. The Psalms themselves are always expressing it — this alternation of vision and becloudedness, of light and darkness, of faith and doubt. Rarely sensitive men and women who live much in the life of the spirit, and who attend much to their own spiritual states, have in all their biographies left us such records of these alternations of spiritual experiences as to leave us no room to doubt that the soul itself has its ebbing and flowing tides; now rising to meet the power of God and now flowing away in weariness and loneliness.

What is the law of our individual life is also the law of our common life. From time to time there are happy periods upon which all that is best in our corporate life seem to converge. Then, for a little, the nations dwell in brotherhood, the poor are sought out and cared for, moral idealisms lie like light along our horizons, the poets sing for us, and the masters of thought and vision hearten us with their profound messages, great statesmen lead the peoples, and the fulness of the Kingdom of God seems not too far away. And then the

## THE TIDES OF THE SPIRIT

tides begin to ebb and we slip back into fear and distrust and strife and moral blindness.

If life then is subject to such alternations as these, if we do but obey in all we are and do, some hidden heart of power whose measured beats are registered not only in the rising and falling of a single life in a single day, but in the very on-going of humanity itself, we shall do well to consider the deep signification of it all and find out if we can how the ebbing tide of life may somehow be so followed and directed as to secure for us a new empowerment and afford us new points of departure; for the secret of prevailing power is more nearly in the utilization of the ebbing than in the mastery of the flowing tide. If our tides of relaxation lead us nowhere but to weariness and confusion then life is always undoing itself; what is woven in the light is unravelled in the darkness, and we do but return, after each little seeming gain, weary and disillusioned, a little less strong and a little less confident, until in the end the ebbing tides bear us out through the shadows into waters dark with the mystery of death — and our brief day is done.

I would dwell upon this, I say, for the hope of any kind of strong and glowing life lies in our power to utilize this rhythm of the spirit, in our power to gain in our times of withdrawal not only strength enough to carry us to the old levels but strength to carry us beyond them. We must believe that there is some purpose in a process so universal, some profound meaning in a law which knows no exception. The most significant thing in a man's life, therefore, is that to which he returns when strength has spent itself. Where does he go for re-empowerment? When the batteries have spent their energy, how and by whom are they

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

re-charged? When we are conscious of relaxations — which at once defeat and warn us — where do we look for rest and healing? Into what hidden places do our retreating tides withdraw? Upon what centers does life collect itself anew?

We give various answers for such questions as these — we children of ebbing and flowing powers. Some of us possess no power of recuperation at all. Once we have spent ourselves we are thereafter of little more account than the discarded batteries which from time to time you take out of your motors and throw away. The world is full of men and women who are failures because they have never learned how to renew themselves. What little knowledge and force they had to begin with, once spent, is gone forever; and thereafter they are only driftwood upon the currents of life. In business such men fail early, become dependent upon the forbearance of their friends, are held to their places perhaps by the structure of society, or custom, or habit, or some such thing as that, but without any real power in themselves; falling away, if the supports which restrain them are by any chance removed, into the vast body of the hopeless and well-nigh submerged, to be eventually like some waterlogged ship sunk in some storm.

Such business failure is closely akin to moral failure. We have only to cast up our own experiences to remind ourselves of a long and unhappy list of men and women who have never been able to meet the onset of temptation, or to oppose a brave front to the drive of evil desire, or in general to meet with any kind of sustaining force the powers which a world like ours oppose to our progress.

More subtly still we may fail in faith and vision and confidence and hope, still indeed keeping our wonted places, going about our conventional occupations, and

## THE TIDES OF THE SPIRIT

yet somehow so lacking in real spiritual force as not only to count for nothing in the great spiritual enterprises but to have really no inner life at all worth naming. There is not a church anywhere which has not upon its membership list name after name which represents nothing but spiritual defeat. Such as these began with a little measure of devotion and power, but their devotion soon spent itself and their power hardly outlasted their first identification with the Church; without ever being either sorely tempted or greatly tried or having spent themselves in any wearing kind of service, they have merely become names and nothing more. It is this which makes a Church roll-call one of the most unhappy exercises in which a church can possibly engage.

There are others who are borne of their ebbing tides to the false and misleading. Such as these quench their thirst at poisoned springs. They seek unholy pleasures; they depend upon narcotic drugs and drinks; they stimulate themselves with dissipation and are in the end more weary and helpless than they were to begin with. The feverish life of any great city, with its "white ways" which are not white at all but blackly overlaid with moral shadows, is all a testimony to the mistaken ways in which we seek to be made whole again. Who are those for whom we open theatre after theatre, and contrive excitement after excitement, whose luxury of food and dress and play and drink is sheerly criminal? These are they who can find for their weariness nothing better than an hour's forgetfulness, and for their need of peace nothing better than a hectic distraction and for the hunger of their souls nothing better than the husks the swine did eat. If we have nothing better to go apart to than such as this, we are poor indeed.



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

Many of us seek to re-collect ourselves in outdoor life and physical exercise. The gospel of exercise has never been so preached and followed since the high days of Athens as it is in America today. And there is much to be said for all this. Ideals of physical fitness are working a real revolution in our life. They compel temperance in meat and drink; they enforce an almost austere régime of life. The benefit of it all is beyond debate. We are securing new physical foundations for the life of the future. And yet, if we have nothing better to which to go apart than the country club, the gymnasium or even the sea, the hills, and the forest, we are failing to reach and drink of the truly "living waters"; unless our ebbing tides carry us to something better than such occupations and disciplines, we are still far from the deepest and the best. The body is the temple of God and it is much to keep the temple clean and wholesome, strong and beautiful; but if there be no altars there, no holy of holies, no Shekinah which the brooding wonder of God makes sacred, then after all the temple is no true temple, and its inner sanctuaries are pathetically bare of what they were meant to contain and reveal.

Time would fail me if I sought to speak of other sources of power and recreation to which we turn for strength. Music, art, literature have values and meanings which cannot be easily exaggerated, but they are not enough. The soul cannot live out of symphonies and picture galleries, or marbles and bronzes, or out of books alone,—even though the great be our friends and the wisest be our guides. There is something beyond all this. Unless the soul return upon God we shall never have come into the true secret of renewal.

Jesus went apart into the mountain to pray. He



## THE TIDES OF THE SPIRIT

loved the mountains or he would not have sought their serene uplands; but the strength of the hills is but a dream if they do not carry us beyond their little summits to the God from whence cometh our help. He knew and loved the wonder of the outer world, watched with discerning vision the pageant of the seasons, and saw in the flight of a bird or the blooming of a flower a witness to his Father's sheltering care. But for him the outer world were empty if he did not there discover his Father's presence and pass through nature up to God; he loved all wholesome human fellowship but there were seasons when even his best friends had nothing to offer and aloneness with God became as necessary for him as light and air. His ebbing power, his sense of weariness and need carried him back to God as unavoidably as the tides are withdrawn upon the sea. He went apart to pray and in prayer and communion his purposes were rebaptized, his will charged anew with the strength of God, his love with an infinite tenderness, and his whole personality refilled with mystic infloodings of the divine, which made him the God man and God to men.

If even Jesus Christ were thus dependent upon times of withdrawals and upon spiritual communion and empowerment, what shall we say of ourselves? If he did not dare to stop short of his Father God, as he sought to re-collect Himself for the difficult and the sacrificial, will anything less than God suffice for us? We must refuse to be halted until we have come back to the divine. Pleasure, athletic discipline and culture are but broken cisterns unless God fill them — and a generation which has no hidden source of strength beyond what these supply will fail in the highest, and will be puzzled as we are puzzled today by the gradual falling away of

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

the highest efficiency in spite of all our endeavor to secure it. We are always talking efficiency and we are but indifferently efficient. We are preaching discipline but we are undisciplined. We have a vast deal to say about culture but the fine flower of it blooms but rarely, and our weariness deepens with all our endeavor after rest. We have stopped short of God and we shall have no peace till we return to Him.

I would not have all this lose itself in vague generality. It is tremendously concrete, the most practical thing in the world. Wise physicians are beginning to discover the source of nervous and mental mal-adjustments in souls which are not at peace with themselves. The soul, like the body, may bear for years the scar of an ancient wound and be ignorant of its own undoing, until by patient analysis, by processes which are sometimes akin to the surgeon's knife, the old sore is laid bare and cleared away, and health and power begin to re-possess the whole of life.

We are beginning to discover that faith in God is a mighty reinforcement in every kind of sickness. The patient who meets the skill of his physician with, as his own contribution, a confidence in an under-girding strength which makes for health and well-being and asks only to be given opportunity in order to do its blessed and healing work, is already half cured. There is a kind of mental serenity, which is nothing other than a trust in truth and the power of it, which is the secret of all strong, intellectual life. Our very passion for physical well-being leads us back to physical laws which need only to be discovered and trusted in to do their perfect work with us. Beneath our feverish, economic life there are economic laws which need only to be followed and rested in to lead us to industrial well-

## THE TIDES OF THE SPIRIT

being, and deeper than all this is the rest of the soul in a power which will not fail us in our sorest need; a love and compassion shepherding us even through the valley of the shadow and edging the darkest cloud with the promise of light beyond.

I do not see how we can live or work at all, in a world like ours, without believing in a power mightier than our own which makes for righteousness, in a love which our want of brotherhood can never defeat, in a patient goodness, inexhaustible and unresting, which moves through human strife and blindness toward its own enthronement. There is nowhere any sustaining strength or healing process which is not the fringe of the garment of God. We shall never have come back to the ultimate strength until we return to Him.

This is half the truth. The other half is this: We are never really renewed until we are renewed in our souls. You may call the soul what you will; I do not know how to define it. You may call it our true personality, our best and enduring self; you may call it the self we were meant to be; you may call it what you please; but I do know that all self-conscious life deepens down into something profounder than knowledge, mightier than will, more glowing than love; out of which knowledge, and will, and emotion lift themselves as mountains out of the depths of the sea. This is the soul into which we live and out of which we live. Knowledge is deceitful and will fails of its high purpose and love is capricious and shadowed if the soul be not strong and steadfast. It is not independent of the fortunes of the body, but the soul is more than the body; and until we be there rested and renewed, all else is idle. The great approaches to the heart of life are not through sense but spirit, and whatever does not spiritu-

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

ally reach and re-collect us leaves the depths untouched.

Every age, of course, has its own gospel of which it stands most in need. There have been times when the inner life has been far too much dwelt upon and men failed to leave the altar and the cloister for service and human fellowship and redemptive contact with the world. No need to preach a gospel like this to a time like that; for then they stood most in need of that in which we most abound; but we, because we are held captive by outer things, seeking to save ourselves in deeds and occupations, because Martha and not Mary is our patron saint, we need to hear and heed the gospel of a return upon God. It is harder to preach than the gospel of social service or physical exercise, but, it is immensely imperative and we shall find half the difficulties of it disappear when we begin to put it in practice.

Prayer is not beyond the reach of any child of God. We may not seek the mountains, as did our Master, but before the day is done we may find some place apart with our Father, and though our words be halting and our hearts fail us, directly we begin to pour out our needs to Him we shall know that prayer is no mere self-delusion but a blessed reality in which spirit with spirit may meet. Faith is not so easy as it used to be, but a steadfast trust in a sustaining love and goodness which undergird and possess us is not beyond the power of any one of us. A sense of the presence of God is not always easy to gain, but the consciousness of cooperation in thought and purpose, love and deed, with our Father God may be achieved by anyone who is willing to fall back in every act of life upon those deeper realities which constantly come out to meet and possess us. The

## THE TIDES OF THE SPIRIT

worship of your Church, its spiritual offices and sacraments, are all doors through which you may enter into a spiritual communion. We have only to take up more faithfully and more earnestly the religious life to which none of us are strange and to which all of us are committed, to discover that there is reality in it, and power in it, and God in it, — and so we come to Him.

The very season itself will help us if we are willing. Lent is no accident, nor a mere ecclesiastical process. It is rooted deep in the needs of the soul, in the experiences of the Church. It is the creation of the tides of the spirit in their return upon God. It comes at a time when we are weary of manifold activities and when we would escape for a little the world and its occupations. It is rich in association and suggestion. Its very exercises and disciplines have their healing values. It asks us to simplify life, to restrain its self-indulgences, to exalt the things of the spirit and to subordinate the things of the flesh. It asks us to substitute devotion for pleasure and spiritual loyalty for self-interest and worship for diversion. It opens for us a door through which we need to pass into realities without which we cannot live; and in all this we have Christ, for our comrade and our example and the kindling suggestion of his devoted life to add depth and power to our own devotion.

I think there was never a season which so demanded of us a new return upon God as this Lenten season, 1917. The sorrow and weariness and perplexity of our world is with us day and night; the cry of it reaches beyond the stars. I think the world will lose its reason if it does not discover its God. And we, who are a little part of a vaster fellowship, can render no truer service to Christ and his world than to seek, in the season which lies immediately ahead of us, some clearer

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

knowledge of his will whereby to imitate him more faithfully and to serve him more loyally. We can render no greater service to our time or more worthily prepare ourselves for whatever the future holds for us than to go apart with God.

Twice in each twenty-four hours the tides of the ocean, soiled and discolored through their contact with our shores, withdraw themselves into the bosom of the deep, there to be cleansed and rebaptized in the clean and salt immensity of the sea, there to hear again the call of the sun, the moon, and the stars, and so cleansed to come back with a blessed power upon the coasts which are unlovely without them, and are kept sweet only by their healing contact.

Life is like that. For we too are much stained through our contact with occupation or pleasure and all the coast of reality. The withdrawing tides of our souls need to be gathered again into the clean, the vast, and the unfailing; there to be rebaptized in goodness and vision; there to hear the voice of the eternal, to answer to the compulsion of the Unseen.

Out of such a communion as this we shall return again to our duties and our relationships, healed and recollected; to achieve — please God — in some vaster advance some new victory for the Kingdom of Christ and to release some deepened measure of love and power and goodness.

## VIII

### A GOOD CONSCIENCE

*"But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned."—I Timothy 1 : 5.*

Words ride like ships upon the tides of time and rise and fall with the changing years. Today a word is dominant and in its dominance testifies to the ideal and convictions of an age. Tomorrow it has fallen from its high estate and its diminished use testifies to changed insights and convictions in the souls of men. Just now we are apparently in the way of retiring conscience from its once dominant station. We lay no such emphasis upon it as did our fathers, nor do we so constantly employ it as one of the approved weapons of our moral welfare.

It is impossible to overestimate the significance of this, for it means that we are living in new regions of idealism. Our very center of moral gravity is changing; we are seeking new polar stars. There are in the main, I think, three reasons why we are forgetting conscience and what it stands for. We are substituting the social conscience for moral sensitiveness to individual faults.

Our dominant ethical world is social. It voices our profoundest and most characteristic aspirations, but our concern about social righteousness, sincere as it is, is bafflingly impersonal. We build and furnish our houses of vision, unwitting what fashion of folk we shall be when we have passed at last through their shining doors. We picture fair worlds with compelling vividness: we



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

are strangely vague as to our proper station therein. We have a clearer vision than our fathers of the moral meanings of our common life and the need of a common effort for its redemption, but we are in sore danger of forgetting, in our passion for a better world, the high imperatives of personal goodness.

Moreover, conscience and all that conscience implies is being supplanted by a denial of personal responsibility for many forms of wrong-doing. We are now being told that if only men be fittingly clothed and fed they will straightway be honest, and that fallen womanhood needs only a living wage for its redemption.

What place has conscience in a world whose deep-rooted sins will begin to wither and die directly we begin to raise wages, and whose redemption is a matter, not of moral and spiritual travail, but of the single tax, economic legislation, or whatever other scheme will change our social environment and usher in a new day?

To crown it all, we do not nowadays take kindly to ought and must. Goodness should, we are persuaded, be an instinct of the soul undarkened by any austere shadow of compulsion; life should be the free play of personality, unhampered by moral conventions. These and like considerations, explain our diminishing use of conscience. What shall we say of it all? This, most emphatically: we are not done with conscience, but need rather a new vision of its unchanging power, its mighty meaning. There was never such need of its re-enthronement.

The most complex and far-reaching social problems return at last to the individual soul. Listen to what the President of the United States has been saying just as these words are written: "Every act of business," he says, "is done at the command or upon the initiative of some ascertainable person or group of persons. These

## A GOOD CONSCIENCE

should be held individually responsible. It should be one of the main objects of our legislation to divest such persons of their corporate cloak and deal with them as with those who do not represent their corporations, but merely by deliberate intention break the law." These are wise and far-reaching words. Men are real; the corporation is a fiction. We have been shielding ourselves behind corporate cloaks, spending ourselves in corporate arraignments, and losing ourselves in dreams of corporate redemption, while all about us is a world of sinning, aspiring, struggling men and women who are neither dreams nor fictions, but the makers and un-makers of a holy world. And the sooner we are brought back to this homely and unescapable truth, the sooner we shall begin to set our feet upon the King's Highway. The voice of conscience calls us back to a sense of our individual responsibility and commits us to that lonely commerce between ourselves and goodness without which all else is vain.

As ancient authorities crumble, and the time-worn judgment seats to which men have long come up for guidance and direction begin to be deserted, as democracy in Church and State spreads its ferment abroad through the world, and men follow the gleam of freedom, sometimes down roads which lead to ruin and anarchy, sometimes across the very hills of God, so much the greater need that there should be established in every soul a throne of obedient intimacy between the soul and right, from which righteousness may be administered. Thus, and thus only, shall we secure an obedience without which we should all suffer shipwreck, a temper of disciplined goodness without which liberty is the mother of ruin and disappointment.

We cannot dismiss personal responsibility without

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

unspeakable loss. Once we have persuaded men and women that a bare back and an empty stomach excuse the gravest faults, we have made them brother to the beast. The life is more than meat and the body than raiment, and though the moral struggle of a great multitude is made pathetically hard by the conditions under which they are compelled to fight, and though a just God in His divine adjudications will take into account the odds under which His children have contended, and though we are all under the compulsion of conscience itself to fight as for life for a better, juster world, still the need of conscience is so much the greater as the strife grows desperate. Here is a holy light which has led God's good soldiers through many shadows, a heavenly re-enforcement which has again and again saved the day, an august voice which has called the wandering from the pit's edge and turned them again to the Father's house. No, we cannot dismiss conscience yet. Those times in which we seem to have least need of this eldest daughter of the voice of God are the times in which she is most necessary to the well-being of men. St. Paul is God's own teacher when he tells us that the end of all instruction is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned. A good conscience is the keystone of life's arch.

Where does it come from? It came from God, and yet in all likelihood it came from Him, as so many other and most intimate and precious possessions of our personality have come from the same creative hand, through eonian descent. It is so much a part of ourselves that we would have to unravel the very web and woof of personality to come to the secret of it, and yet it has been woven into our substance by the shuttle of time and upon the loom of experience.

## A GOOD CONSCIENCE

They tell us now that our sense of right and wrong is the cumulative and funded experience of the human race, and that conscience is not the voice of God but the testimony of experience. Suppose it is. Is not experience also the voice of God? If experience has created in the soul itself thrones and tribunals and voices of authority so beyond challenge in sanctity and authority that we accept them as the voice of God, does it not bear a great testimony to the moral quality of the universe of which we are a part? Morality dwells where we did not dream she had her habitations. She makes the winds her chariots, and her ministers a flaming fire. Whither shall we flee from her presence? If we ascend into heaven, she is there. If we make our bed in sheol, she is there. If we take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there does her hand lead us, her right hand hold us. She is a light to guide and a rod to check. She does —

*“ Preserve the stars from wrong,  
And the most ancient heavens through her are fresh and strong.”*

And conscience — conscience is the voice and witness of it all. It is a lamp unto our feet and light unto our path, a voice always to be heard, an ever-present judgment bar, a constant re-enforcement of every righteous cause, a barrier to be passed before we take to an unholy road, an immediate and axiomatic response to ethical situations, a supreme court of appeals, the last lonely relationship of God and man. Nay, a voice which once obeyed is final, a judge in the knowledge of whose approval we may fearlessly face God Himself, and for whose good opinion a man may gladly choose to die.

Remember that the apostle insists upon the need of a good conscience. The very force and authority of con-

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

science make it unspeakably potent either for good or evil. The nobler manifestations of conscience dignify our history, glorify our race. For the sake of conscience the weak and simple have had "trial of mockings and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonment," the catacombs of the eternal city are transfigured in that light and "alpine summits cold" do, because men died there for conscience's sake, kindle to the Dayspring from beyond the hills of time. Rivers, as they flow, chant the triumphant memories of those who sang the praises of God with lips at which the cruel water lapped, and the very voices of the sea testify to the dauntless quality of those who for conscience's sake committed themselves to the great deep. The feet of men have worn paths to the shrines of conscience and in the telling of the story of conscience the pages of history shine with a new glory.

But conscience gone wrong is pregnant with disastrous possibilities. Ill-guided conscience has lighted many a martyr pile, broken many a saint of God upon the wheel, sacked many a city, ruined many a home, sent abroad brave and devoted men and women to wander in strange lands or to die beneath lonely skies. Ill-guided conscience has driven men to bitter and fruitless austerities, emptied their lives of joy and fruitfulness or whispered into the ears of the dying the indictment of the unforgivable sin. When we have said "Here I stand. God help me. I can do no other," Heaven and earth are bound to attend, for we have spoken out of an ultimate necessity, and if there be justice anywhere we shall never be condemned for having so spoken. None the less, we do not thereby escape moral responsibility. We are still to be judged for the pains we have taken to make such a protestation the expression of a

## A GOOD CONSCIENCE

clear insight and a richly disciplined moral nature. We are under bonds to follow the light, but we are even more deeply under bonds to see that the light which is within us is not darkness. What makes a good conscience, then?

I. Its supremacy, to begin with. Conscience may indeed alter the fashion of its rule; it must never abdicate and it cannot share its seat with another. Conscience is supreme, or nothing. Every lesser question — "Will this pay?" "Will it make me happy?" "Is it expedient?" "Will it get me honor?" "Will it secure me contentment?" "Is it the easier way?" — must, if conscience is to keep an undiminished authority, give place to the one question which conscience alone consents to ask: "Is this right?" A good conscience always dominates life as mountains brood above the valleys where men live and labor.

Those who have had the mountains as the keepers of their horizons, for whom the gates of the morning have opened through the passes of the hills, and the thresholds of the sunset been laid level with mountain summits, will understand their ministry. Not that we needed always to be looking up to them, then we should never have done anything else, but they were always there, serene, patient, strong, untroubled, kindling to the morning, radiant in midday amplitudes, the very altars of God, feeding constantly, whether we looked or no, their gravity and their strength into our souls. Conscience should be like that: the highest thing against our sky-line, an over-brooding presence, assuring, directing, correcting, and always the one unchangeable reality by which we test our courses and orient ourselves anew.

II. A good conscience is not only supreme, it is sensitive. There is an openness to delicate moral distinc-



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

tions, a fine directness of response to quiet, half-hidden, finely shaded moral imperatives which, like light and shadow across a landscape or the subtle transparencies of the atmosphere itself, are the very conditions of moral perfection. It is not easy to say what one means here, but we all feel it. It is like the overtone of a noble voice. The difference between the voice which moves us with haunting suggestions of the mystic tears of things and the voice which leaves us cold is not in pitch or tone or compass, but in something deeper, which is itself the revelation of the singing soul. Something like this gives determining quality to goodness which is so warm, courageous, beautiful that all the austere heart of it is lost in light and perfume, as the purple heather hides the granite rock of Scottish hills. It is a sensitive conscience which makes the difference, a quality kept intact only in an instant and unfailing obedience, not alone to massive moral imperatives, but to little homely goodnesses and quiet hidden duties and lost through any coarsening of the fibre, any hardening of the moral sense. Selfishness, bitterness, disobedience, the love of stained and unholy things, passing across all the mystic surfaces of the soul, dull and darken them.

III. A good conscience is always guided by trained and penetrating moral judgments. There is indeed an immediate and intuitive quality in conscience which seems to free it from the necessity of long deliberations or balanced judgment. Many of its operations are automatic. It outruns judgment and returns its decisions without deliberation. It is this quality more than any other which gives to conscience its most inexplicably authoritative and awesome characteristics. It is free from our doubts and hesitations and speaks as God might speak. But moral habits and instincts so direct,



## A GOOD CONSCIENCE

so intuitive, are always rooted in moral travail. Every moral convention was once a conviction. The men and women who had first to face this or that moral problem solved them only by the labor of their souls. We also in the brave conduct of life are always reaching points where inherited judgments will not do.

“God fulfills Himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.”

is the poet's way of saying that however wise and good the judgments of the past have been, we are always under bonds to face the unfolding situations of life for ourselves.

Now the guiding agent in all this is moral judgment; the estimation of situations, that is, in moral terms. No easy task this. There is nothing in which the whole of a man is so searchingly made manifest as in his moral judgments. Such judgments reveal our whole temper; they spring out of all our training, grave consequences wait upon them. In such judgments as these we make our truest contribution to the deepest necessities of our own time. We order the rise and fall of institutions; we further the triumph or defeat of great principles; we determine the well-being or the misery of men. Such judgments possess a kind of deathless quality. They will walk abroad in a thousand forms to help or hamper the warriors of righteousness, when we ourselves have been dismissed from the field. As we solve our own moral problems we are the makers of the conscience of the unborn; co-workers in the creation of the moral sense of man.

This heavenly wisdom in the conduct of life is deeper than casuistry; it is higher than mere knowledge. This is that wisdom the gaining of which is better than the

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

gaining of silver and the profit thereof than fine gold, whose paths are peace and which is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her. This is that understanding which has might, by which kings reign and princes decree justice. We may well question whether we give the place and weight to trained moral judgment which it deserves. We think in terms of efficiency — that is one of our ruling words — of pleasure, of pain, of gain, of the practical outcome of our schemes and ambitions, but do we anticipate as we ought the moral consequences of our programmes? Are we distinctive in our power to estimate situations and proposals in terms of righteousness, forecast their moral outcome and relate them supremely to right and wrong? We are in more than one region far from the true highroads of life because we have sought to decide, upon low and unmoral levels, questions which can know no true decision until they have been met and bravely answered upon the austere uplands of righteousness itself.

IV. This sets us face to face directly with still another characteristic of a good conscience. A good conscience is lighted by love. "Love is always the surer judgment"; loveless moral judgments are always wanting in that last divine validity which makes them in very truth the daughters of the voice of God. A loveless conscience neither forgets self nor takes into account the need or the weakness of others. It is not so much ill-guided as unloving consciences which are so fruitful in moral contradictions and unhappinesses. Love alters all our outlook upon life, heightens our insights and intuitions, searches out, by a kind of heavenly grace, and understands the troubled weaknesses of men, throws about their derelictions the mantle of a divine charity, does not refuse to walk with them the ways of

## A GOOD CONSCIENCE

redemptive expiation. Love is swift to serve, slow to condemn, quick to battle for others, patient to bear with them. It is a strange testimony to our weakness, and indeed to our waywardness, that we have been so little able to join together conscience and love in life. Love so often becomes spineless and tragically indulgent; conscience too often becomes bitter and unsympathetic. So the two walk far apart and we all suffer together because of their alienation. Conscience brings to love qualities without which love is no true love; love brings to conscience qualities without which conscience may become the most cruel master and the most ill-advised guide in the world. When these two walk together as they ought, all the fruits of holiness and the flowers of beauty begin to blossom along the way and a great singing follows them: the voice of the well-being of man.

V. A good conscience is always on guard. It challenges every motive, asserts its right over every deed. It does not come or go at the bidding of self-interest, it is not drugged by pleasure or put to sleep by any siren's song. It is easy to put out the fire of moral insurrection when the first spark fails; it is not so easy when every power and passion is ablaze. Conscience at the stile of By-path Meadow will save us from much lying in the "stinking dungeon" of Doubting Castle and from such a fight with Giant Despair as often puts the issue in doubt. So King John, reaping at last the full harvest of all his evil sowing and looking from the ground where the blood of the slain, finding tongue, cried out in red reproach, to a sky dark with the shadow of imminent doom, turned upon the man who had been his tool:

"Hadst thou but shook thy head, or made a pause,  
When I spake darkly what I purposed;

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

Or turn'd an eye of doubt upon my face,  
As bid me tell my tale in express words;  
Deep shame had struck me dumb, made me break off,  
And those thy fears might have wrought fears in me:

\* \* \* \* \*

Out of my sight, and never see me more!"

It is an evil day when, in some situation from which retreat is difficult and the shadows deepen, we must so turn upon an unfaithful conscience, which might in the beginning so easily have saved us, finding "hostility and evil tumult" in our very soul because the warden of the gate failed in his watchful task.

VI. A good conscience is always extending its empire. A world which is being remade as rapidly as ours, whose relationships are being almost unbelievably extended, demands an equal extension of moral insight and authority. Standards of right and wrong which yesterday seemed wholly adequate are today almost tragically disparate. Time was when the field of conscience was coterminous with close and clearly seen relationships of life, social duties were few and simple enough. A man dealt with his neighbors, and if so be he dealt with them simply and honestly he had done his part. The consequences of his actions begun and ended with his village or his countryside.

Today all that is changed. The consequences of our actions girdle the globe. The cheap purchase at a bargain counter may mean a sweat-shop, hard-driven employees, long hours, overworked children, desperate men, tempted and distraught women. A business transaction may involve directly a city full of people, indirectly it may affect the policies of a nation. We see behind the ordinary employments of life their far-reaching consequences; the barriers between east and west are broken down and our whole great weltering world, wherein we are tied

## A GOOD CONSCIENCE

up altogether in one bundle, by filaments which are being spun and woven through all our days and all our deeds, confronts and challenges us.

How shall we extend the empire of conscience in such a world as ours? How shall we stretch abroad its scepter over forces so vast and turbulent? It is our master-moral task, and it must be done. Conscience may not be halted at our dooryard; it must rule in vaster fields than these. Here is the deeper significance of all the travail of our own time in which we are tossed as an ocean liner in a mid-Atlantic storm. Through the welter of legislation, the ferment too often half hysterical of the progress of new ideas, the crying aloud of the heralds of strange new kingdoms, conscience is in action. We are seeking to make righteousness regnant in territories which righteousness has heretofore but brokenly occupied, and to subdue to goodness unordered and rebellious provinces. The fight is on, the noise of it is in our ears, the wounded are constantly being brought from the front, the defeated and the discouraged are coming down from high places, those victorious in the strife are half lost in the smoke of battle. God give us power enough to carry it through.

VII. A good conscience is always being renewed, aye rebaptized in the power which first gave it birth. A true moral life is not, as we have too often taught, a crystal vase which for one flaw is to be cast aside forever, but a living, struggling, growing thing, a tree as it were deep rooted in the past, some of whose branches have been smitten by the lightning of passion, or broken in some tempest shock, or weakened by subtle growths, or dwarfed in the forest shade, but whose vaster spread is nevertheless flung abroad to the light of God, lifted toward the sky, renewing its own life, out-

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

growing its wounds, concealing its scars by the very processes of life itself, and reborn with each new spring of the soul. What is all this but God coming anew into life and what is the Cross but the deathless assurance that He is always at our call?

I have seen consciences so scarred by the fires of evil indulgence as to be seemingly dead, remade by the grace of God until they became tender as the conscience of a little child; wills so enervated that they waited supine in the anarchical ruin of all that they were meant to rule, reinstated upon their thrones of divine administration; capacities of moral vision strangely dulled opened anew to the rising of the light of God, and all this because men and women in their extremity, given courage by the vision of the Cross and guided by the touch of the pierced hand, cast themselves anew upon the love and power of God, and were there reborn.

In one thing the best and bravest of us, the weakest and most craven of us, are alike: we shall never have strength enough to fight the battle through to the end, nor become fit instruments of the righteous process of the Most High unless we come back again and again to God for moral restorations which will never be denied us;—nay, unless we walk so constantly in His presence that all our goodness, whether secret or manifest, is but the constant outflowing of His saving presence. It is by the help of God and in the discipleship of Jesus Christ that a good conscience is securely established and changelessly kept. So established and guided, it becomes indeed a holy power both to control and impel, an administrator whose edicts are registered in a braver, nobler world, whose high decrees so operate that God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven.



## IX

### THE POOL AND THE CONDUIT

*"Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and all his might, and how he made a pool and a conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the Kings of Judah?" — 2 Kings 20 : 20.*

In the long story of the Judean kings, so full of human interest and so strangely interwoven with light and shadow, King Hezekiah is well remembered. He bore himself as a good king ought, keeping his own life clean and unstained, caring for his people and making a brave show against his enemies. The tides of war broke more than once against the very walls of his capital city, but he saved his throne and his kingdom. He cleansed his temple from the defilement of ancient superstitions and made it worthy of the worship of the Lord. He beautified his city as he could and in the end, having endured much, he "slept with his fathers," remembered by the ancient chroniclers of his people for that "he made a pool and a conduit and brought water into the city." The last light of his setting sun falls not upon his battle-fields nor imperial pomp but upon the pool which he had made for the comfort of a thirsty people, and the sound of falling waters is his requiem.

Nothing is so long remembered in this world as the service which addresses itself to elemental human needs:

"The tumult and the shouting dies,  
The captains and the kings depart,"

but what men have done to make other men happy and blessed is never forgotten. Kings in the end are remem-



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

bered not for their greatness but for their humanity. The famous or the infamous deeds of the kings of France gather the dust of oblivion; but France has never forgotten the king who wanted every peasant to have a chicken in the pot on Saturday night, and when in the red fury of the French Revolution those to whom nothing was sacred broke into the resting places of the mighty French dead and violated their sepulchers of kings and potentates, they paid court to the very dust of Henry of Navarre because he loved his people and would have fed them when they were hungry.

The chronicle of King Hezekiah then may well recall to us through the symbolism of the pool and the conduit two simple and unforgettable truths: First, the power of personality, and second, the great human ends to which all brave and worthy life should address itself. We are today very greatly in danger of underestimating the worth, the meaning and the responsibility of individuality in our endeavor for a better world. Corporate ideals, corporate action and corporate responsibility are in the way of supplanting individual ideals, individual action and individual responsibility, and the reason is not far to seek. Our world is doubly enlarged: once through the very multiplication of all its forces; and once through the wearing away of whatever frontiers lately separated us from our neighbors.

The Western World at the beginning of the 20th century has more than twice the population of the Western World at the beginning of the 19th century, and the individual shrinks apace. "Surely" we say, "a man might have counted for something in Jerusalem or Athens or Florence; but he is lost in London or Chicago or New York." Our industrial organization has largely ceased to be the fraternal action of men

## THE POOL AND THE CONDUIT

working together in small groups, where each man knew his neighbor and where the distinction between master and workman was humanized by the very closeness of their relationship and their long personal association, and has become instead a vast and complicated machine where the workmen are known only by their numbers and where those in control can have but little human contact with those who serve them.

There is, of course, but one answer to such a situation. The workmen organize in their turn for collective action and collective bargaining. They put their interests in the hands of their delegates, and all negotiations thereafter between master and men are conducted by representatives of massed forces, inevitably led to depend all too much upon the corporate strength of which they are so greatly conscious, too little upon the justice and integrity of their positions. Our industrial bearings heat quickly because they are stripped of those softening human relationships born of sympathy and long association; our industrial forces lift themselves against our sky lines as Alpine cliffs, hard, cruel and menacing. We have already begun to supply in state and federal control such guiding and restraining influences as are absolutely necessary if society is not to be crushed between the impact of organized industry and organized labor. In such ways as these individual responsibility is simply worn away and supplanted by corporate ideals of responsibility and conduct in the face of which employer and employed alike feel themselves so helpless as to forget how socially creative individual life may really become.

I have dwelt at length upon our industrial situation as an outstanding illustration of the changing aspects of our life, because what is true of business is true of

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

religion, charity, education, statescraft, diplomacy, war, and every field of human activity. Beyond all this, whatever secured for us in a simpler world some little space between ourselves and our neighbors is beginning to disappear. Our world is a melting-pot and the future will but accentuate what is already begun. No wonder then that we look out upon it with a feeling of individual helplessness which is always numbing, if we will let it, our courage and our initiative. "What can I do myself," we say, "in the face of conditions so vast and complex as those which surround us? My voice is silenced by the hoarse music of city streets; the cities themselves are only atoms in the vast human fabric. No need for me to try to build a pool and a conduit, and to bring some little water of happiness or blessedness into the world, or to follow my lonely ideals, or to commit myself to any lonely struggle for a happier order." Our very ethics have become group ethics. We act and react as classes and pass on the responsibility for our fault and failure to the larger order of which we are a part. The prophets of economic determinism are re-writing history in terms of the play and interplay of economic forces, and morality in terms of hunger and thirst, clothing and shelter; honesty and chastity and character itself so become the by-product of a living wage. Virtue is a mere matter of economic position and goodness is only the register of the balance of our daily account.

There is no denying or escaping the elemental truth in all this, and I, for my part, am persuaded that the Christian Church would do well to recognize it. We have come almost to the end on the road down which we may expect a purely individualistic gospel to carry men. Behind the instinctive reaction from the religion

## THE POOL AND THE CONDUIT

of Jesus Christ of multitudes whom the Church tries vainly to reach, there is the feeling, to be reckoned with, that the necessities of our corporate life so defeat the lonely idealisms which the Church exalts as not to make it worth while for a man to listen on Sunday to the preaching of a gospel which Monday's task makes impossible. "It is better," men and women are saying, — though they themselves do not clearly formulate the ground of their protest — "It is better not to pledge one's self to these ideals at all than to undertake them and fail in them and so add one more contradiction to life, which at the best is contradictory enough."

I do believe that before we shall have fulfilled the Christian hope or realized the Christian ideal we shall need to so recast the forms of our corporate life as to make them the tempered instruments of the Spirit of Jesus Christ — and all that we have done in the last two thousand years is but the beginning of the battle as compared with this. As long as our world is organized on a competitive instead of a cooperative basis, so long will Christian brotherhood remain an iridescent dream, and we shall secure for our comrades in the fight for it only those who are brave enough to volunteer for a forlorn hope, or else those who find their peace in a mystic individualism, or else those who are not spiritually sensitive enough to be conscious of the crushing discrepancy between the allegiances which they profess and the world in which we live.

None the less there are some things which we must not forget. The power and responsibility of the individual is central and unescapable. It is still the business of every one of us to clear about himself some little space in which a loving and unselfish life may express itself; so at least we shall pierce our darkness with the

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

light from on high. If we are to re-make our world until it becomes Christ's world, we shall do that only as we highly exalt our individual powers and throw the whole weight of a devoted personality against the inertia of conservatism or the sharper hostility of social selfishness. If in the end our dream should come true and our children's children come at last into a happier order, whose forms and forces, possessed and transformed by the Spirit of Jesus, have become his hallowed instruments, even then the world will be kept and saved and blessed only as each citizen of that far-sought order builds out of his own dedicated personality a conduit for truth and goodness and love. We must not let either our hopes or our fears mislead us. Hope and fear alike are to be met by the resolute affirmation of the worth of individuality and our power through making the best of ourselves, to transform that of which we are a part and maintain it upon the high levels of spiritual and moral integrity.

For our world, great or small, is just a world of human folk. States are not different colored areas upon the map; states are human fellowships built out of the living and the loving and the struggling, possessing, in common, lands and memories and disciplines and hopes. Never a city so great but what its people are just men and women going out in the morning to their work and coming in when the day is done to their homes, living together in families and yet, in an unshared and unshareable isolation, meeting the great human experiences as they always have been and always must be met, whether a man be alone or whether he be one of a multitude. Duty has its corporate aspects but it always addresses the individual conscience. Industry has its far-flung organizations, but it is men and women who create

## THE POOL AND THE CONDUIT

them and give them whatever character they possess. Every high-held hope demands an individual answer. Though our ideals lift themselves as mountain masses, they cease to be ideals if they are not held and loved and served by individuals. We are not so helpless as we dream; there is no strength even of mobilized armies which is not the strength of soldiers and captains, nor any courage which is not a personal courage, nor any cowardice which is not individual. There is a mass psychology, but it is only individual states of mind yielding themselves to contagious suggestion. There are corporate achievements, but they are only the sum of the deeds of men and women who build out of themselves that which is vaster than themselves.

Our business, therefore, whatever our station or our force, is to conceive highly our own place and power and responsibility and to build out of all that we are or do conduits by which truth and love and goodness incarnate in us, are made free of a world from which they would otherwise be shut out. I cannot conceive any situation in which it is not, after all, a man's central and continuing business to make himself the channel of honesty, clean living, brave service, aye, and the love and goodness of God; and if we do this, one by one, we need not despair of the battle. We have wisdom enough, if we will use it, not to be cheated by phrases; integrity enough, if we will assert it, not to be lost in the mass; strength enough, if we will release it, not to be crushed by the sense of our own powerlessness, and personality enough, if we will spend it, to make an holy contribution to a better and more Christian world.

History is something vaster and more vital than the mere interplay of economic forces; history is but the record of what struggling humanity has been able



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

through vision and power to compass. History is nothing other than the record of the realization of the eternal values through unnumbered lives in unnumbered generations, following some heavenly vision and serving equities and justices. The Bibles and the creeds of our religion are but the expression of those who, having known God in their own souls, have testified to His goodness and have sought to share with others the truth of which they themselves have been persuaded. There is nowhere any truth or goodness which has not come into the world as waters come into a city through their conduits, through the instrumentality of a rich and consecrated personality.

If we are minded to inquire of how much a single life kept steadfastly open to ideal values and steadfastly dedicated to the service of God and man is capable, we have but to call the roll of leaders and benefactors of humanity. Some of them have been the channels of the knowledge of God. Some of them have been channels of liberty and justice. Some of them have built their conduits between our wandering gaze and the stars; some of them between the broken records of the rocks and our curiosity as to the long, long history of the earth upon which we dwell. Some men have been channels of music; they have heard harmonies in the silences and have made articulate for us the music to which they listened. Some have been channels of beauty; the walls of great galleries glow with the pictured wonder of what they have seen as they looked with the eye of the spirit into the world of form and color.

Our laws, our literature, our industry, have all come to us through channelled lives open to the realities and possibilities of a better world, or richer thought, or more



## THE POOL AND THE CONDUIT

fruitful action, and spending themselves in obedience to their heavenly vision. And such as these are the high and gratefully remembered comrades of the unnoted and forgotten, who have none the less in their own place and in what power they possessed, brought to a thirsty humanity something of the love and goodness which any faithful, devoted life may make real. The love which is about us like light, the steadfast goodness which undergirds our stormy world and keeps it safe through storm and battle, the unnumbered services, whether of the living or the dead, in which we are rich and glad and blessed, are but lonely fidelity to high things made manifest and enduring in simple station, monotonous labor, and unremembered life.

We shall do well to become their comrades, and to that end we ought unrestingly to acquaint ourselves with whatever better or happier thing may possess us and live in and through us. We shall never be able to build any conduit if we have not somewhere access through insight and obedience to the ideal values. Plato, the dreamer of all dreamers, has told us that there is somewhere a perfect world in which beauty and love and goodness have their enduring habitation, and that all things of sense and time are but broken reflections of an eternal light, temporal reproductions of eternal realities. I know not where that land of perfectness is, or how its frontiers run out to meet us, or on what seas you sail to cross it, nor did Plato know; but I do know that God has given to each one of us some little power through thought, experience, or vision, to touch the world of the ideal. Nay, more than that, in Jesus Christ and his spirit and his revelation, each one of us is, and may become increasingly, a citizen of this world of ideal goodness; he has made divinely clear to us the light we are

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

to follow, the laws we are to obey and the holy order for which we are to spend ourselves. Each one of us has some sense of a more perfect beauty to be realized in life and conduct and service; each one of us is conscious of an amplitude of truth still to be possessed and to be conformed to. There is a justice the summons of which we feel and which will never serve the administrations of men until we are just; there are a thousand brave and generous qualities which may only become real as they become real in our lives. Let us make ourselves their channels.

We shall make ourselves their channels first of all in our deeds; great qualities of life never become true in a vacuum. All high and holy things may indeed be thought of apart from their exercise and conceived in their eternal perfectness, but they become true only as we live them out. There is an ideal justice which commands and moves us, but justice in action is just taking the other man's point of view, dealing as fairly with his interests as you deal with your own, considering his equities and deciding for him as you decide for yourself. In such ways as this men are building conduits for justice in every act of their social and industrial life. The challenge of justice meets us at the threshold of our offices and factories, stands beside us at our desks. Some problem of justice confronts us at every turning. The business man must always be asking, How shall I be just to my customers, just to my competitors, just to the men who work for me and just to myself? And as in each case he studies the equities and makes the most just decision of which he is capable, he has brought justice into human fellowship of which he is a part and built a conduit between his factory or office with that eternal reality.

## THE POOL AND THE CONDUIT

And so with goodness. We are never good until we are good for something; in our pleasures, our fellowships, our deeds, our dreams, and in our dealings with our own souls, we are always being offered occasions for goodness, and if so be we seek out and obey the highest, listen to the voice of conscience, and give righteousness the right of way, then our lives function in goodness and we are become a living channel through which goodness comes into the world.

Nor is it otherwise with love. Love becomes real only in human relationships and only in our dealing with others. When we are considerate and self-forgetful, when we seek the happiness of others, gather them up in our sympathies, shelter them with our gentleness, ask only the best for them, and bear ourselves toward them in a kind of tenderness and glowing passion for their enduring well-being, then we have built a conduit for love, and in the power of it life begins to be transformed. Truth is realized among us in the same fashion. When our words have become the clear revelation either of the integrities of our own soul or the realities of the world — when we ask only to discover and make articulate the ways of God whether we discover them in our meditations or the investigations of our laboratories or offices, when in the face of any fact, whether of the outer or the inner world, we ask only the grace to deal honestly with that fact and report it as it is, then we have become the conduits of truth.

There is no end to such illustrations as these. Patience is real only as we learn how to wait for the fulfilment of our joys or the triumph of the causes for which we strive. Courage becomes real only as we make it manifest upon some field of battle; and there is indeed nothing true or ideal to be sought, or loved, or lived for,

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

which may not somehow be made incarnate in our deeds and which without us fails of being real at all. Seen in such a light as this our occupations take on new meanings. They are neither buying nor selling nor teaching nor healing nor pleasure nor any such thing. They are simply channels through which eternal and ideal qualities draw down into an existence whose only justification is the opportunity which it offers for their exercise and which is made perfect only as it becomes the expression of their radiant reality.

Beyond all this, though related to it, of course, we build conduits for all better things, not only through our deeds but in our personalities. For a man's personality, though it be the record of what he has done, is something more than that; there is a power in life which is not included in any catalog of our activities no matter how searching or exhaustive. Personality is greater than any deed. Its profoundest suggestion cannot be made real in words. Personality itself is a voice, a force and an influence. The richest gift which my friend brings me is not what he says, however graciously he speaks, or what he does, no matter how considerate or unselfish his deed; the richest gift my friend brings me is himself. If we dwell much in the comradeship of the high and the enduring and do not fail in any fidelity to truth or duty and seek to be made rich in the gifts and graces of the spirit, and if, above all, we yield ourselves constantly and openly to the influence of Jesus Christ, then in the power and mystery of personality we become more than conduits for love and goodness. We become goodness incarnate and transmute into life itself all high qualities; so transmuted they possess the power of life which is beyond any speech or definition; it must be known to be understood, but once known, it needs no other interpreter than itself.

## THE POOL AND THE CONDUIT

Finally, we build a conduit for all better things in our ideals. For our ideals carry us beyond our deeds and even our personalities. Our deeds are what we do, and our personality is what we are, but our ideals are what we ought to be. They are doors through which braver deeds and more radiant personality may be made manifest. They are the pioneers and the pathfinders, they go before us and blaze the roads that we are to follow. They release us from the thralldom of the present and the actual to make us free of an ampler future. It is through the force of ideals strongly held, that our whole capacity for making possible a fuller measure of goodness is enlarged.

The engineers who direct the channels of rivers and keep our harbors open depend much upon the assistance of the tides and the currents themselves to enlarge and continue the work they have begun. Once the water itself begins to flow through the channels they have opened, it widens and deepens them. The force of the ideal in life does something like that. There is a tremendous head of power behind all holy ideals, for they are drawn from the reservoirs of the Eternal and have behind them the driving forces of the purpose of God. You have only to begin to make a place for them and they will flow in and occupy it and enlarge it and fill it with their holy and healing tides. This is far more than a figure of speech. The experience of the past bears it out, and we shall come all the more quickly into the future toward which we aspire if only we can persuade ourselves to trust truth and goodness more unquestioningly, if only we will begin to do, without so much doubt and debate, what they ask us to do that they may have their way with us. Directly we begin to work with them we work with the rising tide, and what seemed impossible

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

becomes easily possible because we are thereafter working, not in our own strength, but in the strength of God.

Here then is our personal task in a difficult and complex world, — to make ourselves, that is, the channels of truth and goodness, love and justice, without too much regard for what others are doing and with no feeling at all of hopelessness or helplessness; for we are neither hopeless nor helpless. True enough, no one of us has had any great measure of power, and most of us at the best live unnoted and simply useful lives, but each one of us, thank God, has his own openness to the Divine will, each one of us has capacities and opportunities through which the will of God may express itself, and each one of us may create about him some little order and blessed space, in which the will of God made radiantly real to us through the revelation of Jesus Christ may do its perfect and transforming work; and if each one of us so submits himself in deed, personality and ideal to Christian truth and love and goodness, the very multiplicity of our lives will insure undreamed-of amplitude of holy power. God is coming into the world as the tides, through all their interwoven channels, possess and flood the salt meadows of our coast. We have only to remember what others have done and take courage for ourselves.

There is nothing blessed or happy in our lives which has not been made possible for us through the unselfish openness of others to the invitation of the Divine. The church in which we are worshiping would never have been built had not others become channels of the power which built it. Our faith would have perished from the earth had not others kept themselves open to the truth and the power of it. The city which spreads about is but the massive incarnation of the deeds and powers

## THE POOL AND THE CONDUIT

and fidelities of the generations, and of all those who have gone before us, only that endures which they drew from Divine sources and made real in holy and unselfish living. All else, I say, is lost as water poured out upon the sand, but what they have made out of the Unseen and Eternal abides.

Thank God for the old king of a great city who cut through the living rock a way for some stream of living water to sing down from the high places of the hills to the thirsty city streets that little children might play to its music and the weary be refreshed in its draught. And thank God above all, for every one who in true kingly spirit builds in deed and holy passion the living way for truth and love. So the world is blessed in the glory and goodness of God; and we have been its channels.



## X

### THE CHALLENGE OF CHRISTIAN IDEALISM

*"When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" — Luke 18:8.*

The church of the first century believed implicitly in the imminent return of her Lord. It was not hard for the Christians of that far-off time to think that Jesus was waiting in some real bodily form and in some celestial habitation, not too far removed, to return again and that right speedily. Then heaven and earth were near enough, if need be, for daily commerce and the sense of the transitoriness of all earthly things so colored the outlook of the first disciples upon the world that they thought of themselves only as pilgrims and sojourners. Every morning they looked for the coming of their Lord, and as the days passed and still he did not come, they merely adjourned their deep-held hope. Because they believed in his coming they endured pain and persecution, went as sheep to the slaughter, sought no part in the administration of the empire, and lived only for its overthrow at the hands of One who should ride out conquering and to conquer.

There are now, as there have always been, groups of disciples who hold fast to such a hope as this, but the most of us have long since been taught to spiritualize our expectation of his coming and to find the fulfilment of that hope, not in the cleaving of the skies, but in the remaking of our own lives, and — through the remaking of our own lives — in the remaking of the world. For

## THE CHALLENGE OF CHRISTIAN IDEALISM

indeed he is always returning; not indeed in bodily form with such signs of his glory as fill the pages of Revelation with their thunder music, but in Christian ideals and commanding conceptions of life and holy challenges.

The forms of his coming are manifold, but the response which he asks is, in its deeper aspects, unchanging. He is always asking us, in some form or other, to walk in his fellowship, to make his truth our law and his love our guiding light and to be at any cost true to his ideals. So conceived, the challenge of Jesus is the challenge of Christian idealism, and his voice across the years the voice of all holier and better things.

In all this our own part is hospitality, openness, ungrudging response. This I conceive to be in a large way the meaning of faith as here employed. It is the temper in which we receive him, our whole attitude toward him and his cause. It is our contribution to the triumph of his kingdom, the point of connection between the challenge of Jesus and those whom he challenges. Let us gather the whole matter up, then, in a single sentence: the challenge of Jesus is the challenge of a supreme idealism, the faith which he asks is a whole-hearted response to every aspect of that idealism.

I. Such a faith is, to begin with, a kind of elemental and unshakable confidence in the reality of the ideal, a profound persuasion that there are not only better ways of life, but that these better ways of life must in the end prevail. It would be unnecessary even so much as to mention all this were it not that the temptation to despair of the ideal is more real than we often dream, and those who have failed in this first aspect of a responsive faith — far, far too numerous. There are men and women enough in the world today for whom the

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

hope of better things is an idle dream. They sit in the seat of the scornful, they are the prophets of things as they are, the apologists of the imperfect, the unjust, the unrighteous. They call themselves practical, but their practicality is nothing other than a slothful conformity to existing orders and time-worn methods. The first condition of the triumph of the ideal is a sheer and unquenchable faith in its reality; a faith indeed which is teachable and which submits itself to the discipline of the years and profits by experience, but an idealism, none the less, which accepts no defeat as final, refuses to be halted by any barriers, proclaims its deathless empire on the fields of its seeming defeat.

“Never turns its back but marches still breast forward,  
Never doubts the clouds will break,  
Never dreams, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,  
Holds we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
Sleep to wake.”

II. The second call of a faith like this is for willingness to coöperate with the ideal. It is not enough to believe in better things, we must work for them. Every business enterprise, every political alliance, all our quest for pleasure, indeed the whole enterprise of life, always offer the choice of at least one of two alternatives: either a conformity confessed or unconfessed to things as they are or the endeavor after things as they ought to be. In many instances the difference between such choices is not dramatically great, it is rather a matter of emphasis, coloring, proportion. In other cases there are such dramatic differences as constitute the enduring glory of those who obey, the unforgettable shame of those who make the great refusal. But whether in great or small ways the constant search for those things which are above makes not only all the difference in the world

## THE CHALLENGE OF CHRISTIAN IDEALISM

but makes a wholly different world. We are not to underestimate the cost of it all; it will mean again and again the sacrifice of convenience, the choice of the more difficult. It will mean smaller profits, limitations of popularity, the willingness to dispense with ease and superficial prosperity. But such an endeavor means, on the other hand, enduring successes, solid achievement, immense gains in character and, above all, a happier and better world established upon those foundations against which even the gates of hell shall not prevail.

III. Well, then, the response of faith to the challenge of the ideal is first of all belief in the ideal, and then coöperation with the ideal, and then finally something which grows out of all this, but lifts itself to rarer altitudes: the willingness to risk all for the ideal. A wise friend has taught me a new use of the word adventure. All great enterprises are adventures, all noble life is an adventure. "Death is the great adventure." Safety and splendor of achievement do not dwell under the same roof. It is impossible to sail the high seas and to beat to and fro behind breakwaters at the same time. Victories are won only upon the field of battle, the greatest goals are kept for those who take to lonely and unchartered roads. Youth answers eagerly to such considerations as these, but maturity questions them, and age too often denies them. More than that, wealth, station, responsibility, ease and honor are the age-old foes of the open road and the uncharted sea. Faith is always a light across the sea, the far call of undiscovered land, the lure of unpassed horizons.

All great things depend for their triumph upon just such a temper as this. Truth always calls for faith as the one unescapable condition of its triumph. How helpless truth is when men will neither believe nor follow

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

it! A Galileo may retell for us the story of the heavens, shift the centers of sidereal systems, release the earth from its fixed station and send it swinging in rhythmic freedom of motion around the sun itself, but if there is no faith in the truth of his discovery our imaginations will be still bound by the littlenesses and contradictions of the ancient astronomy. Charles Darwin may trace for us the origin of species and give us the key to the very creative methods of God, show us by what long ascents life has climbed from level to level, and so secure for us new conceptions of the power and wisdom of the Eternal, but if there is no answering faith in the minds of men there will be no going out of our reverence to meet such new revelations of the strength and wisdom of God, no kindling of our souls to cosmic music.

Truth is always saying, "When I come to men will they receive me, believe me, love and follow me; are they always awaiting me, confident of my triumph?"

Love asks the same question. The proffer of love may lie about us like light, but if we will not receive it, what good will love do us? Love will remake our world if we will give it room and stead, scatter our shadows, master our enmities, reconcile our differences, establish the empire of our dreams, but only as love meets faith, only as love finds in our whole attitude confidences upon which it may establish itself, wills through which its decrees may be made operative, souls in which it may set us its blessed and transforming administration. Righteousness demands the same response. We have never been able to commit ourselves to new methods, follow leaders whom God has raised up for the vindication of struggling goodness or dethrone hoary and entrenched wrongs, save as faith has wrought with goodness as a comrade.

## THE CHALLENGE OF CHRISTIAN IDEALISM

All these things illustrate in broken fashion the significance of this great question of Jesus: "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" There is no doubt about his return. He comes to us in all holy ways of conceiving and conducting our lives, in flaming ideals, in revelations of the full possibility of Christian discipleship always more ample and compelling, in unselfishnesses, sacrificial opportunities, — the age-old challenge of Christ. How will we receive him? Are we willing to let him have his way? In the form in which Jesus is coming to us now, is he finding faith on the earth; is our quality of openness, willingness, devotion, commensurate with the call of the best; are our lives really open doors to higher and holier things? Is the Son of Man finding faith on the earth?

Take politics, for example. The challenge of the Master comes to us in new political conceptions. I do not believe for a moment that it is irreverent to identify the spirit of Jesus with what is best and most heartening in the new political possibilities which face us. Why should he not return in better politics? He has given us the hope of the Kingdom; he has taught us to dream of gracious and blessed fellowship; he has kindled our passion for states whose officers shall be peace and whose exactors righteousness; he has taught us never to be content with the stained, the unworthy or the unjust.

His challenge, then, meets us on every side. Is it possible to carry on our politics in the spirit of pure idealism? Can we plant our political growths in the soil of a fine unselfishness instead of a foul sordidness, and still hope to see them flourish? Is it possible to transform and consecrate that vast capacity for leadership which so many of our political bosses have shown and which they have never for a moment purely or un-



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

selfishly devoted to any high and hallowed cause? Can political parties make their appeal upon reasonable platforms which they sincerely mean to carry out, utterly discarding their machinery, their trickery, their bribery and their graft, and still hope to triumph? Do we really possess the moral capacities of redeemed politics; are we equal to the burdens which such demands lay upon us; are we strong enough to suffer what must needs be suffered before the Republic shall become truly the Republic of God? These are questions which are upon all our lips. The asking of them is the sign of the Republic's awaking; the right answer of them will be the earnest of the Republic's redemption. And yet what are they after all but the interpretation into the language of our own time of the challenge of Jesus to his own doubtful and hesitant friends?

The Son of Man comes in new industrial conceptions. Can we be done forever with our wasteful and unholy competitions; can we subdue our inordinate passion for gain and exalt instead a patient passion for human betterment; can we conduct our businesses in the spirit of a stainless honor, not only in our immediate dealings with those with whom we do business, but in our remote and indirect dealings with our competitors? Can we do away with jealousies and waste, and organize business into fellowships which shall not only be great in their methods and outlook, but divinely great in their spirit? Can we cease using men as our tools and work with them as comrades; can we consecrate our strength to the needs of the incapable, the ungrateful and even the unjust? Can we so saturate our industry with the spirit of the Lord Christ that business shall become really a sacrament, suggesting in its fellowships and its services the reincarnate spirit of the Lamb slain from the foun-



## THE CHALLENGE OF CHRISTIAN IDEALISM

dation of the world? Have we daring enough to commit ourselves to such adventures as these and swing great business enterprises out upon divine audacities and holy confidences in the word of Jesus Christ? "When the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?"

The Son of Man is coming in new conceptions of brotherhood. We hear his voice in the wailing cry of children, we see his approach in the lonely, in the forgotten and the downtrodden. His kindling challenges come to us in hopes which flame and convictions of social sin which will not let us rest. Have we faith enough for it? Do we run out to meet it with expectation, hail it with a joy which gathers intensity since that coming has been so long deferred? Are we all ready to say, "Yes, I am heartsick with so much of this; I taste on my bread the salt bitterness of the tears of the hungry; my comfort is a reproach and my luxury will not let me rest while want is abroad and poverty crouches at countless doors. I will pay my part of the price of a better world." Are we willing to become crusaders of the new time and to mark upon our breasts the sign of the Cross while the skies rock with our shout, "God wills it, God wills it!" As the Son of Man comes in a hope and passion of a better human fellowship, is he finding faith on the earth?

He comes to us in new conceptions of manhood and womanhood; in humility and obediences; in the purging of our selfishnesses, the exile of our conceits. He comes to declare us sons of a common Father and helpless without the redemptive love of God. He comes to strip us of our pride, break down our self-content, loosen our weary, weary hold upon what rather burdens than sustains us, that we may fall into his Father's saving arms. He comes to write new lines in our faces, put a

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

new light in our eyes, make our souls gracious and beautiful, and make us citizens of the unseen. Have we faith enough for all that? Are our souls open and eager? Do we welcome every discipline which purifies, all transforming experiences, every indication of his love and purpose? As the Son of Man is coming in such gracious possibilities of new and better life, is he finding faith?

The challenge of Jesus comes to us in changing conceptions of the conduct of the Christian Church. The Church is the organ of receptive faith, and the fellowship of those who believe in the regnancies of Jesus Christ, are willing to trust to his methods, be mastered by his temper, and seek his flaming and consecrated ends. The Church may be a multitude of things besides, but this above all she must be, must continue to be. She is to seek out and declare to men the ways in which Jesus is always returning, the forms in which his spirit seeks to be reincarnated, the aspects of life which are to be subdued to his holy purposes. The Church gathers together those who await the coming of her Lord, who are eager for the triumph of unselfish love, who wait for brotherhood as watchmen wait for the morning, and whose passion is an unquenchable fire. Just as long ago his disciples gathered together in anticipation of his coming, so his disciples gather still. They looked up toward the clouds, we look abroad across the world of men; they searched the starry spaces of the sky, we search the roads of toil and sorrow; they looked to see him coming in legions of rejoicing angels, we expect him in the comradeship of simple and devout souls, and everywhere our expectation is his opportunity.

It does seem as if the God of the Church had, by the

## THE CHALLENGE OF CHRISTIAN IDEALISM

historical processes of the last three hundred years, been bringing the Church to the place where she would be compelled to recognize this central task of hers, and by her faithful performance of it either to live or to die. The Church has been stripped of a multitude of things which were but yesterday her apparent glory. Her unity has been broken, her authority is only a memory. Men no longer flee to the Church as to a sanctuary or bow their knees before her altar through fear. The Church possesses today no great measure of social consideration, she is no longer the single and undisputed guardian of truth, she has no secrets as to the unseen and eternal which others may not share. The larger social forces are working against and not for her. What, then, has she left? The master thing in her life? The Church still possesses her unchanging and unchangeable inheritance, her capacity to respond to the challenge of Jesus Christ, go out in his temper to spend herself for his ideals, to live or die in his spirit. Has she faith enough for all this? The mightiest temptation which the Church is facing today is the temptation to conquer the world by conforming to its standards and accepting its methods. Every effort to bring in the Kingdom of God by violence, to unduly exalt organization and method, to distrust gentleness, patience and utter openness to the truth, to follow blind leaders whose strength lies in their power of abuse, who ban rather than bless, who seek to save the men on the street by the methods of the street; all this, I say, is so deep an apostasy that the Church, hard pressed as she is, may well seek first of all forgiveness for herself before she seeks forgiveness for the world. Give the Church, I beseech you, a greater place in your lives, but do not dictate the terms upon which you will grant her your comradeship;

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

accept, rather, the eternal conditions of the Lord of gentleness, vision and sacrifice.

Jesus Christ is coming in new conceptions of world relationships,<sup>1</sup> in ancient nations reborn almost in a day, in visions of peace and brotherhood, in the hope of a day when war shall be no more and nation shall walk with nation in holy and untroubled fellowships. Have we faith enough for all that? Are we willing to hasten the day when the millions of men who are now being gathered upon the frontiers of jealous states shall be dismissed to the tasks of peace; when the gray wolves of the sea shall prowl no more from port to port or threaten with the terror of their guns the cities of the peoples? Do we dare trust, in international relationships, the same motives which have long since come to govern men in their relationship one with another? Is the parliament of men an impossible dream; the federation of the world but a poet's lyric fancy? These are grave questions. They are agitating chanceries, being debated in cabinets; occupying senates and parliaments. But when we have come to the heart of them they are nothing more than a repetition of the challenge of Jesus, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

IV. Surely there is no need of further illustrations. Surely we have come to see that what Jesus is asking of us all is just a great confidence in his supremacy, an utter willingness to follow his methods at any cost, a willingness to dare as men have never dared before for the sake of the ideals he has given us. I think we may, by such tests as these, divide men this morning into

<sup>1</sup> This was written before such conclusions as it breathes were shattered by the guns of Europe, but I will not change a word. It is, it must be true, or the hope of our Lord's coming is an idle dream, his expected empire the supreme delusion of humanity.

## THE CHALLENGE OF CHRISTIAN IDEALISM

two great groups. On the one side are those who have no faith in what Jesus Christ stands for, who do not expect nor desire the supremacy of such a love as his, who do not believe that life can be successfully carried on in any such way as he desires, who dismiss as impossible dreams all his expectations of a holier time, who believe that peace is an iridescent dream and the only thing which will turn the edge of the sword a sharper, heavier sword still. Such as these have already answered directly or indirectly the challenge of Jesus. He does not find in them any such responsive faith as for a moment makes possible the triumph of his kingdom in their lives or interests. On the other hand are the dreamers, the adventurers of the spirit who dare to put all to the test, the devout who have waited long in holy expectation of better things, all the good soldiers of high and unstained causes; all those who believe that love is stronger than hate, that gentleness in the end is an unconquerable weapon, that loving patience wears down many foes, and that only in the regnancy of Jesus and the realization of his kingdom shall we find any enduring peace. Such as these do really offer the faith which makes possible the triumph of better things; their hospitalities are doors of the kingdom, and in their willingness to receive him the triumph of the Master is assured.

Again and again the Christ of the years has met his disciples with flaming and heartening challenges, but he has never asked of any age a more heroic consecration than he asks of ours, or offered to any time a more splendid coronation if so be we conquer in his strength. He is asking men to enroll in his army, in their sheer devotion to the deathless causes of the spirit. Is there any greater thing which the men of any age have been

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

asked to do than we are asked to do — to exalt the unseen and eternal in the face of the massive affirmations of modern materialism, to trace the will of God in all the revelations of modern thought, to seek the righteousness of God in all the vast involutions of contemporaneous affairs, to enthrone Christ as Lord of the wealth and might and possibility of such a century as ours? If the sound of such a trumpet blowing across the hills of time does not arouse us from our lethargy, then we are hopeless. Three hundred years ago, in the travail of the German Reformation, when the Protestant Churches were to be gathered together at Augsburg for conference and cooperation, Prince Wolfgang von Anhalt set out for that convocation. His friends remonstrated with him. "Many a time," said the old soldier, "have I ridden to war to help my friends, so now for once I will take horse for the Lord Christ." Who of us will take horse for the Lord Christ?

"The Son of God goes forth to war, a kingly crown to gain,  
His blood-red banner streams afar. Who follows in his train?"

## XI

### CLOUDS WITHOUT WATER

*"Clouds they are, without water."—Jude 1: 12.*

The General Epistle of Jude is the third shortest and quite likely the least read of the books of the New Testament, though the ascription with which it ends has dismissed waiting congregations for generations, voicing like noble organ music our profoundest adorations. The date and authorship of the Epistle have long been the subject of wholly irreconcilable controversies; but all the commentators agree in this — that it was born of some pretty acid situation in the early Church. False teachers had arisen who were beginning to mislead disciples none too strongly established in Christian fidelity at the best, and therefore the more ready to be swept far from their true course by any wind of false doctrine. The leaders of the Church felt the situation keenly and wrote such letters as lie between the Epistles of Paul and the Book of Revelation to warn, to strengthen and to guide. They did not fail in such denunciation as religious discussions have always called out, and the Epistle of Jude is particularly rich in an acrid abuse of these ancient heresiarchs. In a long, stinging sentence they are called "hidden rocks," "shepherds that without fear feed themselves," "autumn trees without fruit, twice dead," "wild waves of the sea foaming out their own shame," "wandering stars for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved forever."



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

Against what pestilent heresies such indictments as these were directed or whether or not they deserved it who were so scourged, we shall never know; but there is at the very heart of these biting figures one phrase so rich in suggestion, so perpetual in application that we may well consider it together this morning. Those ancient foes of the faith of the Church are called "clouds without water, driven by the winds." The figure itself is a part of all the marvelous imagery of the meaning of water to a thirsty land which the Bible is always employing. Such a figure as this has meaning only in a thirsty land; only those who have long searched the burning sky for some promise of "the early and the latter rain," and searched in vain; only those who have seen some cloud of promise rise above the horizon and then, undone by hot winds, leave the earth still unwatered, could give to the world so vivid a figure of the life which promises much and denies its own promise.

For clouds have many ministries, but their supreme service is to carry water from the sea to the thirsty land. They are born of the sea and the sun and the winds. They are the children of the sea — not indeed in the literal sense that all clouds are sea-born, but in the larger sense that all our continental water supplies depend upon the motherhood of the sea. If the clouds were not from time to time as it were rebaptized in the oceans, they would finally fail. They are the children of the sun, for it is through the expansion of the sun-warmed atmosphere that evaporation is made possible. They are the children of the winds, for the winds bear the cloud-masses upon their wings, gathering them for the storm or undoing and scattering them. The stuff of which clouds are to be made is everywhere about us. The air is never more luminous or the light more moving

## CLOUDS WITHOUT WATER

in its quality than in those high days when from horizon to horizon not a cloud is seen, though the very quality of the light testifies to a tomorrow of storm. The sunsets of such days as these always draw across the western horizon a veil of mists so luminous as hardly to be discerned except for the light behind it; but none the less a veil of mist which widens and darkens until the skies are overcast. Out of such stuff as this, then, the world of clouds is built—unsubstantial, but rich and beautiful. It is a dull imagination which does not answer to the wonder of the world of clouds or discern in them some trailing of the garments of God. They build gateways for the dawn and sunset, they pave celestial spaces with their fretted gold, they pile themselves in castellated masses against the horizon, they come up before the winds, terrible as an army with banners. They possess the mass and amplitude of mountain ranges.

“They are,” says Ruskin, who knew and loved them as few have done, “not yards of air traversed in an instant by the flying form, but valleys of changing atmosphere leagues over; that slow motion of ascending curves which we can hardly trace, is a boiling energy of exulting vapor rushing into the heaven a thousand feet a minute; and that toppling angle whose sharp edge almost escapes notice in the multitudinous forms around it, is a nodding precipice of storms, three thousand feet from base to summit.” Even the wonder of the arching firmament domed with blue would be wanting in wealth and meaning without the clouds. There day after day for us God paints His pictures, with the winds for His brushes, the sky for His canvas, and the spectrum of light for His colors. “Nature has fifty pictures, made up each of millions of minor thoughts

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

— fifty aisles penetrating through angelic chapels to the Shekinah of the blue — fifty hollow ways among bewildered hills — each with their own nodding rocks and cloven precipices and radiant summits and robing vapors, but all unlike each other, except in beauty, all bearing witness to the unwearied, exhaustless operation of the Infinite Mind." And yet this would be wanting in its last meaning if the clouds themselves failed in their essential service; if they brought no water to a needy world.

This is their God-given task, and no imagination can easily surpass the sober scientific statement of what they accomplish. There is no harvest nor any meadow nor any forest which is not in debt to the clouds. Beneath the brooding motherhood of the clouds they have come into being; without the brooding motherhood of the clouds they would cease to be. All the rivers which run to all the seas are but the gifts of the clouds to the earth. There is nowhere any deep-channeled watercourse which has not been worn by the burden of the clouds, nor any mantling snow nor any glacial ice which is not their gift. They have wrought for us the abysm of the canyon of the Colorado, as they have edged for us the sheer escarpments of the Alps and Himalayas. The clouds turn your waterwheels, they weave your cloth, they shape your iron, they shine in every electric light, they are at our service in every water faucet. These driving mists of all created things seemingly most unsubstantial are in the economy of nature the carriers of power and servants of life, so important that our world without them would be a desert, and the failure of their ministry a cosmic calamity.

No wonder then that Jude's figure has a force and searching suggestion which make it one of the great

## CLOUDS WITHOUT WATER

figures of the New Testament. For we too in our personality and the promise of it are instruments of incalculable power. There is no influence like consecrated personality nor any failure like the failure of personality to fulfil its promise. All the rich content of life is the outcome of consecrated personality working in happy power toward holy ends; and when this fails, either in the individual or in the group, we find ourselves living in a kind of moral desert, barren and bitter. We have great need, therefore, to take account of ourselves and to examine our own lives to see if by any chance we also are "clouds without water."

Every minister who preaches from this text ought to remember that it was first of all applied to the church's ministry, and to ask himself whether he is wanting in real power or fulfils the promise of his office. It is strangely easy to be much occupied in the Christian ministry, to be troubled about many things, to preach many and earnest sermons, and even to spend oneself in travail of mind and spirit and body, and yet to produce no results at all proportionate either to the office or the opportunity. All high offices fail in their essential power more easily than the more common and practical offices.

It is easy to see when a furrow is not well driven or a field well sown; it is not so easy to discover the real weakness in high spiritual endeavors, to find out why the spoken word returns fruitlessly upon the preacher or the service fails in the end which is sought. I shall keep to the end of this sermon any suggestion as to ways of correction and empowerment. It is enough now for the minister himself to recognize that he too may be a cloud without water, and to ask of God a more fruitful and blessed ministry.

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

This text was spoken of teachers, and the teacher today, as two thousand years ago, may look to his own work, for it is possible to be accurate and industrious, to be much concerned about facts and discipline and examinations, and a shallow kind of culture, and yet to be wanting in the power of discipline and transformation of character, which are the only worthy ends of all education. The real office of the teacher is in a kind of spiritual illumination, a kind of quickening of life by life, beneath the sheltering conduct of which all great and worthy things are nurtured.

For the soul of youth is a God-given field lying open to all the winds which blow, from which the harvests of a happier future are to be gathered; and under God the teacher is the mediating instrument of it all. Every thoughtful man must feel that with all our passion for education here in America we are missing, more largely than we ought, the real ends of education. We are far too easily misled. There is a kind of hysterical element in our American life which shows itself in politics, religion, business, and the stormy fluctuations of public opinion, in the light of which our schools and colleges must be judged. And where we who are their leaders and teachers have failed to fulfill our promise, we too are clouds without water.

What shall I say of the almost endless applications of a figure like this? Here is something by which fatherhood and motherhood must be tested, and all the relationships of the home, our businesses and our professions; all the simple things of the constant days, and the vaster movements and interests in which we are all involved. We share together the feeling that our idealisms have not fulfilled their promise, our visions have somehow failed us, and that our world has been long

## CLOUDS WITHOUT WATER

enough under the influence of high and redemptive forces to have been somehow a happier and better world than it is this morning. We are searching far and wide for the remedy. May the remedy not be nearer than we dream, more simple than we suppose?

Above all that, we who are concerned with the Christian Church, who love it, serve it, and through whose life the Church itself lives, may consider the ancient indictment of Jude. Christianity, through its divine commission, has no lesser task than to possess and transform life. Has that been done? Christianity has built its cathedrals, organized its churches, proclaimed its gospel in Europe for above a thousand years; the standard of the cross was the first standard to be set up on the soil of a new world. America has been Christian since the morning of her history, and yet the more massive manifestations of the common life of Europe and America today are not Christian. A multitude of shadows obscure the light and beneath the brooding of the spirit of God there are sterile and barren places which reproach and pain us. Nay, I would not lose all this in a too general application. Here is our own church, rooted through the decades in the life of a historic city, strong in fellowship and resource, unusual in power and situation. Is the outcome of our life what it ought to be? Are we fulfilling our full promise? Are there such harvests of love and goodness and fidelity growing beneath our fostering care as justify us before God and our neighbors, as make us the blessing we ought to be? I fear there must be but one answer to all these questions. We are not asked to disallow or undervalue what we are or do. We are to remember gratefully fidelities, loyalties, services and goodnesses which are our common possession; but we must still confess



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

before God that we have not rendered our full ministry, we must bow ourselves to the ancient judgment, "Clouds without water."

How may we correct it all? Here, too, the clouds may become our teachers. There is always some sound reason for a cloud which fails in its service. Every cloud has water in it, for the cloud itself is water; but there is a point of saturation short of which no precipitation is possible. Short of that point the moisture is scattered and swallowed up in the void and vastness of the upper sky. The clouds are at the mercy of the climates through which they pass. They are again and again undone by conditions which literally suck them dry and fray their fabric without ever giving them a chance to discharge themselves in rain. They are dependent upon changes in temperature which compel precipitation.

In general, clouds want a full baptism in the sea, and some challenging occasion to fulfil their full office. We too are like that. There is a certain under-saturation of the soul in goodness and devotion which makes life strangely ineffective. Our world today is not so much wanting in goodness as hampered by a kind of scattered and diffused goodness. Our occupations, our pleasures, our interests are hostile to a full spiritual devotion. Such a life as ours is always tending to dry up the spiritual springs.

Here, I suppose, is the old, old contradiction between the world and religion, always so strangely felt, always so difficult to overcome. It takes a deal of spiritual coherence to stand against the manifold occupations of a society like ours; too many enjoyments, too many interests, even worthy interests, tend to diffuse and dissolve the real power of life until, busy as we are, we



## CLOUDS WITHOUT WATER

have nothing commensurate with our toil to show for it all. Our pleasures are like winds from the desert. I do not see how even the strongest and most devoted life can lie constantly open to the influence of the modern theatre with its spectacles and its suggestions, or to that passion for dancing which has possessed society for almost a decade, without being burned out in subtle but effectual ways and left empty of any real power for constant and blessed service.

I am not preaching an austere Puritanism. I am simply noting the sources of spiritual sterility. The Sahara desert is kinder to the clouds which are driven above its burning surface than is our worldly and extravagant life to the finer harvests of the soul. Beyond all this we need new spiritual baptisms, to be born anew in the sea of the love and goodness of God, to feed the springs of the soul from the wideness of the Divine. We cannot live without God or be rich in any kind of true wealth without His contribution. Prayer and worship and meditation upon the meaning of life and its appointed purpose—above all, much dwelling with Jesus and much waiting before the Cross with its disclosure of the method and the cost of a prevailing love, are absolutely necessary for the Christian and the Christian Church. Culture and clubs and forms and the lesser things will not answer. A thirsty land must be fed from the sea, and a thirsty soul must be fed from God. The Church needs to come back to Christ, to be rebaptized and recharged—to be rebaptized with the divine spirit, to be recharged with divine power.

Men with whom I talk about such things as this usually say substantially the same thing—a testimony to the ideas of the earnest and devout laymen. “Give

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

us things to do," they say, "and we will do them. The Church must be saved by definite but manifold activities." I cannot agree with them. Every one of us has more things to do than he is doing well. There is no lack of occasion. The world is full of occasions. The life of every one of us is a series of points of contact with duties and challenges and opportunities which at the best we are not meeting as we ought to meet them, and which at the worst we are failing to meet at all, and every one of us knows that this is so.

The controlling thing in life is the spirit which fills and directs it. Love will never want opportunities for loving; love will find them all day long. You say, "Give me something to love, and I will show myself loving." Christ says, "Charge yourself with love, and you will find exercise for it all the day long." You say, "Give me something to be faithful to, and I will prove my fidelity." Christ says, "Make fidelity the law of life, and all that you do will be charged with its holy power." I do not mean in all this to deny the need of leadership, of specific opportunity, of concrete tasks, but I do mean to say that it is not for the want of these that the harvests of the kingdom are failing. It is for want of lives "hid with Christ in God," and so rich in the spirit of Christ as to charge everything which they touch with that spirit and to bring to every relationship great and holy qualities with which their souls are already overflowing. That is what this church and every church is first of all for; not to be always telling you things to do or even finding things for you to do, but to bring you back to the source of all power and fulness in Jesus Christ and so to secure for you a life charged to the saturation point with the great Christian qualities.

It is idle to ask a cloud to rain until there is water

## CLOUDS WITHOUT WATER

enough in the stuff of it to make rain. It is idle to ask loyalty, service or sacrifice of the soul until loyalty and service and sacrifice are the very texture of the personality. You have only to look abroad to see how true this is. The men and women who charge our world and bless it, who create and carry the Church, have in themselves a kind of holy initiative, a fulness of divine strength, a fulness of love and goodness which makes them what they are, and which is the secret of their power.

Once we have secured all this, then of course we need opportunity. A saturated cloud must come somehow or somewhere in contact with the precipitating force; a saturated life must express itself in duty and in service. The opportunities for all this in a world like ours begin in the quiet, hidden places of our own soul and reach to the ends of the earth. Every quiet meditation, every hidden thought, every half-shaped purpose, every affection is an opportunity for the expression of Christian qualities. Why, when the air is charged as it may be with moisture, every grass blade is an opportunity for ministry. The very dewdrops which gem the grasses and embroider the meadows with jewels born of the quietness of the night to shine for a moment in the morning light, are nothing more than the contact of the treasures of the sea with the humble need of the children of the meadows and roadside.

Great and enduring relationships of life, home and business, and the state and the church are above all the opportunities for the revelation of our spiritual wealth. The world is thirsty this morning for what Christianity has to give — thirsty for peace, for brotherhood, for the true wealth, for loving human contact, for healing contentment, for redemption and for hope. You need not

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

go beyond the four walls of your own home and the four walls of your own church for the chances which you need. D. L. Moody used to say that the world had never seen what God could do with one man who followed and yielded himself to the Divine will; the world has never seen what God could do with one church following His will and yielding itself unreservedly to His purpose.

If we were to truly fulfil, as we may so easily fulfil, these two conditions of a fruitful life, saturating ourselves, that is, in love and thought and purpose with the Christian spirit and with whole-hearted willingness exercising this spirit in every one of life's relationships and opportunities, our power would know no end. We should not only transform and spiritualize what lies so wholly within our control — our own lives and our own immediate fellowships, but we should reach those lives which seem now so far beyond our control, and contribute to social justice, human betterment, world-wide brotherhood and the very winning of the world for Christ. Every single raindrop which falls ministers to the whole earth; every devoted Christian life ministers to the whole need of humanity.

The clouds themselves are but the creatures of forces beyond themselves. They have no choice but to obey. They are born and they die at the bidding of changing seasons, ebbing and flowing winds and all the meeting of all the powers which make or unmake the pageantry of the sky. We are not like that. We have our own powers of resistance and initiative. We need not surrender ourselves to the winds of influence or temptation. We may turn our own life toward the way of the love of God. We may seek our own rebaptism in His love and goodness, devote ourselves anew to the ser-

## CLOUDS WITHOUT WATER

vice of our Lord Jesus Christ, and open our souls to the incoming of every holy and blessed influence. We may fill the vacant places in our churches, and carry into the world the vision we have there gained. We may bring to all that we are and all that we do, what God gives us, steadfast, brave and resolute, not excusing ourselves through the fault or weakness of others, but sustaining ourselves in a God-given strength. Then we shall be no longer "clouds without water" but the rich carriers of heavenly blessings, the rising promise of a diviner world.

## XII

### THE UNNOTED LOSS OF GOD

*"But he knew not that the Lord was departed from him."—Judges 16:20.*

The Book of Judges is a book of strange contradictions. The men and women who move across its pages are seen as through a mist—but into the long telling and retelling of their stories the Hebrew historians have woven an imperishable web of moral insight. Great light-bearing sentences halt us, moral judgments which sound the depths of things interrupt the narration, revelations deathlessly true of the making and remaking of character color the recital of lawless passions and unrestrained treacheries and these ancient memories of a cruel time have so come by the grace of God to constitute a very treasury of spiritual suggestion to which we never turn in vain. The story of Samson is at the very heart of the book; our text at the very heart of his story.

Samson was the son of holy desire, consecrated before his birth by the devout longing of parents who sought him from afar and received the Angel of Annunciation with a prayer which we may well make our own as we contemplate our responsibility to the unborn: "Teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born." A passion so holy had its high reward in the gift of a son who, in the fulness of time, wrought true deliverances for a people hard beset. He won great battles with crude weapons, he was as terrible to his enemies as an army with banners. He saved others, but him-

## THE UNNOTED LOSS OF GOD

self he could not save. His great strength was married to great weakness and in the end his weakness triumphed. He slept in the lap of seduction, and awoke to find himself stript of his power. The deeper tragedy of his awakening was that he did not know his power to be lost. "I will arise," he said, "and shake myself free as at other times." But there was no answering resurgence of strength and his captors mocked him as he stood helpless before them. "He knew not that the Lord was departed from him." So simply as that was his downfall published to the world.

If this ancient tragedy of the soul were without a parallel we should have no need to dwell longer upon it, but because it is a revelation of moral deterioration universal in its possibilities it should halt us all. Each man has, to begin with, his hiding place of power. There is no great strength without a great secret. Two men are always weak: the man who has no holy hidden place of power, and the man who bares his soul to idle curiosity, desecrates his shrines, and pays the debts of his idle or sinful pleasure with all that is deepest and best within him. We need to beware of the man who has no sanctities which he guards as life itself. Samson begins to play with might and life and honor when he even begins to lie about the hiding place of his strength.

Directly a man loses his reverence for the better part of his own strength, that strength begins to desert him. Such a reverence is as far from conceit and jauntiness as the east is from the west. It is not only consistent with a noble humility, but demands a noble humility. The very greatest men have taken their greatness as a kind of holy trust and have safeguarded it as we safeguard the very Shekinah. Great men have too often



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

done mean and unworthy things, but they have always, as long as they were truly great, kept inviolate and apart, as men keep the ark of God, some high region of vision and obedience. There has always been a limit beyond which they would not pass, some one thing they would not do, some truth they would not betray, some heavenly vision to which they would not be disobedient.

It is no mere figure of speech to say that the secret hiding place of his power is each man's Shekinah. It is his Shekinah, the place where he meets God and God becomes real in his life. God comes to us in a multitude of ways, in the laws of conduct, the conditions of business, in righteousness and fellowship and truth. He comes to us in the fertility of our fields, in the wealth of our mines, in the ministrations of the rains, in the brooding warmth of summer suns, in winter silences and solitudes. He comes to us in the spread of laughing waters and His power rises and falls with the tides. He is not wanting in the principles of jurisprudence or in the decision of courts or in the arguments of lawyers, if so be they seek His justice. He is the patience of the long-suffering, the sympathy of those who reach and comfort the troubled.

The great qualities in which the men who have rewritten history have prevailed — a dominant will, rare sagacity of judgment, lonely courage, constructive imagination, an intuitive apprehension of the main currents of popular opinion and the like, are more than His gifts, they are forms of His indwelling spirit. He is the secret of the healing power of the physician and is the communicable quality of the teacher's instruction. His fire kindles the prophet's lips and sings in the poet's lyric strains. He shines in the splendor of great canvases,

## THE UNNOTED LOSS OF GOD

speaks to us in the serenity of the stars, spreads the sunset's floor of fretted gold and dwells in the happy promise of the dawn. He is patience and insight, and faith and strength. He is the skill of the craftsman, and the merchant's wisdom. He is the warrior's might, the stainlessness of the saint and the mystic's indwelling certainty. To keep faith then with truth or power or goodness in any fashion is to keep faith with God.

The lawyer must keep faith with God in his passion for justice, in the unselfishness and veracity of the counsels which he offers other men, in his dealing with the courts, in his framing and interpretation of laws. He may not keep faith with God in many other regions, but here at least he must be true if the house of his profession is to stand when the storms beat upon it. The merchant must keep faith with God in the quality of his goods, in the integrity of his enterprises, in his honor, his fairness and his consideration. The farmer must keep faith with God in every furrow he drives, in the seed which he sows, in the fidelity with which he serves the growing things, in the ingathering of his harvests, in the marketing of his grains. The mason must keep faith with God as he puts stone upon stone. The architect must keep faith with God in the balance and proportion of his plans, in the strain to which he subjects iron and wood and stone. The artist must keep faith with God in his lights and his shadows. The weaver must keep faith with God in his loom, as the saint keeps faith with God in his hours of communion. If life is to have any power or coherence at all there must be at least one central point in which we are true to truth and in which something greater and better than we are utilizes us with our full consent and speaks

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

through us, we ourselves willingly making lips or lives the vehicle of the divine relation.

Of course multitudes of men keep faith with God in these familiar and evident ways who do not keep faith with Him in higher and more intimate ways. The pity of life everywhere and always is that so many of us are rich in God unconsciously, but will not follow on to know the fullness of conscious communion with Him; that so many of us avail ourselves of His lesser goodnesses, but are strangely and ungratefully reluctant to let the intimate light and peace of His presence flood all our souls.

From time to time men come among us who keep faith with God in the whole full region of their lives. They establish their deeds in honesty, their speech in veracity, their souls in sanctity. They add devotion to wisdom, humility to power, goodness to strength, and the love of God to manifold activities. Such men as these are round about us as the mountains are round about Jerusalem. Great qualities manifest themselves in their simplest moments and the power of the Eternal breathes through their daily tasks. An heavenly wisdom expresses itself in every word and action, they live and move and have their being in unsuspected amplitudes of power. The Kingdom of God waits upon their service and marching men keep step to the music which they supply. They are endlessly rich in resources and the passing years do but minister to their growth. No dark-nesses hide them and death himself does but set upon them the mark of a supreme and deathless finality. Such men are all too rare, but they do come to us often enough at least to witness that of which we are capable, to reproach us for the sterile lethargies of our little lives and to prophesy to us the possibility of a Godlike man-

## THE UNNOTED LOSS OF GOD

hood. This is the full secret of the divinely great: they have kept full faith with God, not in little restricted regions, but in the unmeasured areas of the possibilities of the soul.

Now just as the secret of prevailing strength is keeping faith with God so the true reason of all waning power is His departure. When we cease to keep faith with Him He leaves us. We can keep no kind of power undiminished save as we are true to the conditions of its exercise. And the wonder and warning of it all is that the great losses of life are so quietly and painlessly consummated. The tides of God, whether they ebb or flow, are "too full for sound or foam." Long ago it was said of the Messiah that He would neither strive nor cry aloud. The greatest things in life neither strive nor cry aloud: they stand as suppliants in the audience chambers of our souls; they seek in compelling quietnesses to halt and arrest us. They search out every avenue of approach and feel like light at the very crevices by which they may find entry into life, but they do not strive or cry aloud.

The miracle of rising winter mornings fills all our streets with such a misty garmenture of light-woven beauty as even Turner sought in vain for the domes of the Venice of his dreams, and, without speech or language, waits in appealing and transient radiancy for our grateful and discerning vision. God spreads His sunsets abroad in all the western sky for those who are minded to lift their eyes toward the horizons, but the sunset does not strive nor cry aloud. So love comes to us for recognition, so truth dawns, so high fidelities lie like light about us; a great heaven-born company. We have only to bid them welcome by so much as a gesture and they draw near; we have only to repel them by an

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

inconsiderate look and they begin to darken or depart. If we had eyes to see we should find ourselves always welcoming or dismissing guests who come and go, strangely obedient to our attitudes and tempers, our hospitalities or our refusals. God pity us if we are all the while so concerned with transient and unworthy visitants that we do not discern the quiet withdrawals of those great guests. The lesser losses of life are commonly more sharply felt than the loss of its deep and transforming qualities. An uncared-for tooth protests sharply enough, but an uncared-for soul makes little complaint. It is only when we shake ourselves free of the petty, the encompassing or the stained, and address ourselves to some task in which without their comradeship we are foredoomed to failure, that we discover that these radiant guests of the soul are gone.

There are many of us here this morning who at one time and with a great expenditure of labor learned something of another tongue. Homer's grave music rebuilt for us the walls of Troy ; under the spell of Cicero's sonorous periods we saw the day die across the templed hills of Rome. The lucidities of the great French masters were our keen intellectual joy. We felt our way through intricate German sentences to the greatness of German thought, the vastness of German horizons. But we did not keep faith with possessions so precious. They did not ask much; they asked only a little daily fidelity, but we would not give it and they in turn would not consent to be always elbowed back by other interests, ungreeted or unrecognized. So there came a time when we opened our neglected books to find Greek but a confusion of strange characters, and Latin a baffling arrangement of words, our French unpronounceable, our German untranslatable.

## THE UNNOTED LOSS OF GOD

There was a time maybe when the poets spoke to us face to face as a man speaks to his friend, or called to us from their heights of mystery and charm, radiant singers of enduring realities, makers of music to which we march. But we let the days go by and held no high commerce with them, so losing ourselves in coarse and common things that the light began to die from the hills and the magic from the fields. And the poets went their way; a great and jocund fellowship, never intrusive, asking only to sing to us for a little, to bring a gleam into our darknesses or consolation to our distresses or, leading us from time to time to some hill-top, to show us how wide the horizons really are and what lights are resident in noonday amplitudes—but because we would not keep faith with them we lost them. Not long ago I rode one June morning through the meadows of the Vermont uplands with a friend. Something of the light and wonder of the day stirred memories long unexercised. “He wondered,” he said, “what had become of the bobolinks; there had been many of them in just such meadows when he was a boy.” And even as he spoke the air was aquiver with the ecstasy of their songs. The world was full of bobolinks, and every bobolink a lyric voice, but he had lost the ear which heard and the eye which saw, and he rode through the music of leafy June wondering at its silences.

And so on to the end. Powers unemployed are lost, capacities unused weaken into decay. Ideals unfollowed fade into the light of common day, presences unwelcomed turn from our doors, conditions unfulfilled cost us some great price of loss or degeneracy. Laws unbeyed have their ways of automatic reprisal, unworthy indulgences weaken the foundations of character, disloyalties eat the fiber out of our souls. And so between our disregard



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

of the best, our self-immersion in the commonplace, or our self-indulgence in the stained and unworthy, all the inner part of life is consumed, only the outer show of it remains, and when the great day of testing comes God is gone, our strength is illusion and our brave outer seeming but the mask of dust and death within.

It is in such ways as these that we lose our sense of the divine, and then wonder why the world is so wanting in any revelation of God. Men tell me again and again of this or that reason why they do not go to church and why religion has ceased to have for them any discernible meaning. They are fertile in excuses and put the blame everywhere except where it should be put. They either will not see or will not confess, or, more unhappily still, cannot see, that they have so given themselves to the cares of this world and have been so concerned about unworthy things or worse, that religion has lost its meaning for them and God is gone. Worship has ceased to be an exercise of their souls; prayer is no longer the mother tongue of their spirits. Nothing within them rises up to bless the name of God, nothing within them offers any response to the age-old voices of devotion and adoration. Chanting choirs may fill the spaces of churches with the *Te Deum* or waken sleeping adorations with the *Thrice Holy*, but they themselves are dumb, unresponsive. And the pity of it all is that they did not feel and have never felt the pain of it. God did not cry aloud; He simply left them because they would not give Him room, nor fulfill the first tender and gracious conditions of His indwelling. And though in His loss they have been visited with the master penalties of spiritual decay, that decay itself had been so quiet, even so comfortable, that it was as if God left them while they slept. It is only when the call comes for the



## THE UNNOTED LOSS OF GOD

full exercise of wonted power that we discover the greatness of our loss.

It is one of the well-established traditions of history that Abelard, brought face to face with St. Bernard at the Council of Sens, found all his skill in argument, his great power of luminous statement and his dominion over the minds of men utterly wanting. He could make no reply to the man whose presence was a flame of accusation and he appealed in confusion to Rome. Whether or no tradition has dealt fairly with Abelard in this great crisis of his life is an open question, but that Abelard failed in the high promise of his early maturity, and that in spite of his rare gifts his life work issued in confusion and failure is no debatable question. He was not true to truth and loyalty; as he betrayed them they left him bitter regrets and the haunting sense of merited failure. And Abelard is but one of many, nor do we need to turn the dusty pages of a far-off past for illustrations. A great preacher has contended that the early promise of Millais' life was never fulfilled and that in marrying the divorced wife of John Ruskin his truer inspiration was lost. He still kept his marvelous technique, but never after could he put such a look on the face of man or woman as that tenderness of brave renunciation which glorifies the Eve of St. Bartholomew. How can a man paint renunciation who does not know how to renounce? Daniel Webster surrendered convictions mighty as the granite of his home country for an honor which he never won, and died of an inward wound, fallen from his high estate. Even as this is being written a railroad president, who forfeited one of the master industrial opportunities of his generation in obedience to forces whose tangled web he cannot himself unravel, is pursued by courts and popular opinion, asking only that he may be

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

forgotten. And these, taken almost at random, are only three of a vast and tragic fellowship.

Again and again we see men fail in some high moment when their own destiny or the destiny of their fellows waits upon the manifestation of their power. They fall as a tree falls when all the heart of it has been eaten out by decay and the winds smite it in their wrath. If the causes of their failure be traced to their hidden sources they will be found always in some fatal disobedience to the heavenly vision.

Whether the divine light dies first from the valleys of friendly human intercourse and the low hills of duty, or from the heights of aspiration and spiritual communion, does not in the outcome greatly matter. When we have been untrue to the best we know, have yielded to the solicitations of sins and sought our own comfort and our own security, our moral and spiritual deterioration begins. And from such deterioration is born a weakness which either frets life away by processes of slow decay or involves it in some tragedy of hopeless, smiting disaster. If God is gained by insight, obedience, communion, He is lost through blindness, disobedience and moral and spiritual selfishness.

God pity us all who hear in any morning of retribution the old, old cry — "The Philistines are upon thee" — to find our power gone and to look into the mocking faces of our captors.

The story of Samson does not end, however, with his captivity. His eyes were put out, but the eye of the soul became thereby more clear and penetrating. He saw more in his blindness than he had ever seen with open eyes. He was made the sport of his captors and set to degrading tasks, but even as his weary feet wore so deep a path about the mill to which he was harnessed

## THE UNNOTED LOSS OF GOD

that he could follow it in his unchanging darkness, he rediscovered God and in the discovery found himself anew. We may well be sure that something more happened in that bitter time than that his hair grew long again. He was burned clean by the fires of repentance; he was taught humility and dependence; he was purged of self, he drove back to their proper places the pride and the passion which had overthrown him. He took hold of God anew and though he died, he overthrew in his death those who had mocked him, and involved himself and his foes in one common ruin.

No need to say that this was at the best a tragic regeneration. No man loses God without thereafter finding in his scars a testimony which will not be dismissed to the cost of the blindness and the self-indulgence which led him astray. And yet on the other hand those who have passed through such experiences as these and have come at last to a new light are not likely to lose it, and they have beside such a sense of moral and spiritual reality as has made them again and again the prophets, the teachers, the leaders of us all, so greatly competent to warn us because they have suffered so much, so blessedly competent to hearten us because they have found anew the sources of their peace and power.

We may well then in some quiet time of self-estimate and introspection take account of what presences fill the roads which lead to the audience rooms of our souls or stand in the ante-chambers of our loyal regard. Are they arriving or departing? Do they come in light or leave in darkness? Do they come with gifts of ampler power or do they bear away with them that strength which was our birthright? Pray God that those whom we dismiss are only such sorrow-bringing guests as self-indulgence, faithlessness to duty, distrust of God and

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

unworthy conceptions of life, while those who seek us out, sure of high welcome, are the very ambassadors of the Most High, manifestations of the presence of God, coming to abide with us, the blessed and power-giving guests of the soul.

### XIII

#### DOERS OF THE WORD

*"But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."—James 1:22.*

If we were not so familiar with words, we should be strangely moved by their haunting wonder. We breathe, ever so gently, across the almost divine mechanism of our vocal cords; we ask the assistance of lips and tongue and lo, thought becomes vibrant, and truth has found a body. Think, I beseech you, upon a wordless world—how its silences would first haunt and then numb, and then slay us. The greatest things which men may think or hope or dream or worship or hunger for, come to us first in the guise of words.

There was never a sword tempered which has so keen an edge as a spoken word; there is no balm in Gilead like the consolations of love and pity made articulate. Words commend and woo; they quiet our perturbed spirits, they kindle and inspire us, they bridge the gulf between soul and soul. They fling a hundred thousand men against a fortress: they send the lonely out to die in some far country; they have power to call us back from the edge of the grave itself. We need a new respect for words: they are not mere breath, or passing sound—they are life and truth and love and thought and God. "Man's word is God in man."

But we must not let the magic of words themselves blind us to their place in life. A word can never be an end in itself. It is an instrument of the soul—the vehicle

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

of truth. A word which has no reality in it is a lie. The subtlest temptation which we all face who deal with words is to make much of them for their own sakes,— to become their servants, not their masters. Jesus said that our idle words will come up to plague us at the Day of Judgment. There were men a little later than the time of the text who went all about the Roman Empire making a show of words. They made long speeches about nothing, they lashed themselves into a spurious fury over imaginary wrongs while their world was red with blood and hot with evil desire; they debated impossible questions while great matters of life and death challenged them in the streets of every city. They were Rhetoricians — they lived on words which had no relation to life.

A word is more than idle if it be not rooted in reality. A word is more than idle if it does not fulfil itself in deeds—words are meant to be done. True, the connection between the word and the deed is not always overly plain. Words may ask an immediate and vivid response or they may lose themselves in the depths of the meditative soul, there to do their quiet and transforming work, and only after long gestation to issue in any overt act. Here, above all, is what misleads us. We are sure enough of those connections between word and act which lie upon the surface of our lives; we do not always understand those transmutations of word into character and action which lie in the deeps of our lives. A word, to move and remake us, does not need to be a command; it may be the lyric soliloquy of the poet, the philosopher's massive interpretation of life, the prophet's flaming utterance, a lover's wooing, or a mother's benediction; but soon or late every word becomes a deed. If it ought not to become a deed — it ought not to be spoken. If it never becomes a deed it dies with

## DOERS OF THE WORD

the breath which made it. Now there are two ways in which we violate this indissoluble unity between words and deeds. We may do without hearing — we may hear without doing.

This world of ours is all too full of men and women busy about many things whose active life is strangely wanting in vision and inspiration; they *do* without hearing. I think of the great army of workers who have never been taught the true meaning of their work. They never had a chance. The poets never sang to them, the prophets never called to them across the hills of sunrise. They have no horizon, no inspirations. They work like dumb brutes in the darkness of the mines — that you and I may dwell in light. They dig sewers — that our cities may be drained, and our houses be sweet and clean. They weave the cloth which clothes us, and only the clattering looms have ever told them what they do. Last week I watched the workmen building the street on College Hill: swarthy aliens breaking up the roadbed, pounding boulders, spreading crushed stone, sweating and straining. But yesterday men whose names were household words across the continent, lovers of truth, soldiers of the ideal, comrades of the wise and great of all time, marched in their multi-colored garments, every color telling its own story, to brave music, down the street which other men had builded, under the laurel other men had spread.<sup>1</sup> I wonder if they who toiled there knew that they were roadbuilders for the sons and daughters of the Spirit. I wonder if we, as we passed up and down the hill, were grateful as we should have been, to our unnoted comrades, in whose sweat and weariness our way was made easy.

<sup>1</sup> This is a reference to the academic procession of Brown University on the occasion of her Sesqui-centennial.



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

Here before our eyes is the very pathos of life. The world will always have need of men who dig ditches and lay pavements: must they always work in darkness? It is not hard work that hurts; it is work without insight. Surely the laurel of life is as truly for those who build the roads as for the wise and great who walk thereon. Who will tell them so? Where is the prophet who will take the root of bitterness out of the life of the toiler, not by the easing of his toil, but by the transfiguration of his task? God speed him! Our weary world looks up with dumb, appealing eyes searching his coming. It is only by the inspiration of some living word that any of us may be released from the only weariness which makes man a brother to the brute — the dumb weariness of an unilluminated spirit. I say the world is all too full of those who do, without hearing. Sometimes they never had a chance; no one has ever taught them. Sometimes they will not hear; they scorn the sources of inspiration; they are blind to the kindling power of truth. They are not always ditch-diggers and roadbuilders; they are too often merchants and manufacturers and politicians and even preachers; but if so be they have never heard or have refused to hear the living message which defines all well-being in terms of love and truth and service, their work is but a dull, mechanic exercise, fertile in discontent, pregnant in rebellion, and strangely evanescent and sterile.

Over against these are the men and women who are hearers of the Word, but not doers, — no strangers they to inspiring counsel. They fairly bathe themselves in it. They love to be played upon by high emotions; they count themselves the elect because they have listened to the prophets. And yet their lives also are strangely sterile — aye, worse than sterile. If those who do, with-

## DOERS OF THE WORD

out hearing, are most to be pitied, if so be they have never had a chance, those who hear without doing are most strongly to be blamed. They are transgressing one of the first great laws of life. James the apostle has James the psychologist for his best commentator. If there is one teaching about which all students of personality are agreed, it is this — that action is the end of life. I use "action" broadly; it includes uncounted things. The realm of action is bounded on the one side by the soldier's fierce and immediate obedience; on the other side by fruitful tempers, brave and constant attitudes of life, and it includes all that lies between. But whatsoever comes to us must in the end express itself or else it has come to us in vain. It makes no difference whether the word is the most clear-cut demand for action which ever fell from human lips, or the moving melody of a Beethoven symphony — it is still meant to express itself in action, and if it does not so express itself, it is worse than idle; it is a poison to the soul.

There is nothing which so numbs the very springs of action as disobedience in the face of high imperatives or the want of adequate response to anything which deeply moves us. The most perilous state of the soul is to live in regions of emotion which have no meaning at all save as they express themselves in deeds and obedience, and never either to do or to obey; or to listen to great words which we never seriously dream of translating into action; or to look with disobedient eyes into the face of truth. Tauler, the mystic, speaking with the mystic's marvelous insight into the soul states, says of those who delight in high and holy emotions, and bring forth no fruit of righteousness, "that it shall be counted unto them as spiritual unchastity." That is death in life, and such a death as we need most profoundly to fear,

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

for it is death which comes to us in the guise of spiritual gain, masking himself under the forms of goodness, painless in his approach, and hiding what we ought to dread. Nothing is sadder in this world of ours than any true word which returns unto him who spake it, void. Oh, the pity of that! on the one side the teacher who might transform a life; on the other, the unheeding scholar. On the one side the prophet whose flaming word might re-write the history of a nation; on the other side those who go by uncaring. "Is it nothing to ye who pass by?" On the one side Jesus Christ, pouring out the fulness of his redemptive power, in one heart-broken cry which vibrates still across the spaces of the sundering years, "How often would I have gathered you — and ye would not." On the other side, the unheeding city, so soon to be left desolate.

Ah, beloved, we are face to face at last with the secret of so much of our powerlessness. The sad disproportion between the moving sublimity of the words of hope and duty, radiant with human possibility, with which we are all too familiar, and the shadowed actualities of our world and our lives is just here — we are hearers of the Word — and not doers. And thus, says the apostle, we deceive ourselves. We think that in merely hearing we have done enough. "I have gone to church this morning," we tell ourselves; "that is more than my neighbor has done. Ought it not to be accounted to me for righteousness? I am always willing to sign any petition for civic betterment. I went to college — I even wear a Phi Beta Kappa key. I am serving on any number of committees; you will always find my name among those 'present.'"

And so we make a catalog of our intellectual and spiritual hospitalities and actually think that we are doing

## DOERS OF THE WORD

all that could reasonably be expected of anybody when we have merely been having other people tell us what we ought to do. No, we must go further than that, or we would better never have begun. "Be ye doers of the Word," says the apostle, "and not hearers only." Directly we begin to try to *do*, the whole atmosphere of life changes, and the breath of reality — like a northwest wind — clears up the befogged horizons of our souls. Directly we begin to *do*, we come down from the seat of the scornful. Cynicism is the daughter of inaction, but faith and hope are the children of obedience. Directly we begin to *do*, we cease to be critics. (There is a vast deal of criticism which only puts sand into the gears of life, and nine-tenths of it is indulged in by people who will not share the tasks of those whom they criticise.) It is easy to stand far, far from the firing line and blame the soldier; once we begin to fight at his side, and we cover him with the mantle of our charity. The men and women who are doing most in this world are most tolerant of others; readiest with their sympathy; most abounding in their love.

*mantle*  
*very*  
*clear*

Throw yourself into the fight for a better city, and you will not be so impatient of the shortcomings of those who are doing the best they can. Throw your whole soul into the well-being of your church and you will forget how to find fault with its members or its minister. Stand in the trench with the soldier — you will understand why he has not already won the battle.

There is nothing like doing to clear away doubt. The great confidences of the life of the Spirit are like the glowing windows of this church — they were never meant to be seen from the outside. As long as you stand outside the colors are dull, the figures are blurred, the meanings are hidden; but once you come inside then every beam

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

of the light of God brings out a still more splendid color and discloses hidden depths of glory. Prayer is the most impossible exercise of the soul until you begin to pray; then it is the native speech of every needy spirit. The cross is a delusion lifted by devotion against the horizons of time, until you cast yourself upon the love of a suffering God, and then it is the Rock of Ages. The teachings of Jesus Christ are the almost impossible exhortations of a Galilean peasant until you begin to make them real, and then they are the bed-rock of civilization;—the shaping forces of character, the guarantee of peace and justice, the luminous law of the Eternal, the living Word of God.

Immortality is the misleading dream of the children of fate and time until you seek the comradeship of the Eternal, then it becomes the one flaming certainty which no cloud can obscure, or no wreck of any constellation blot out of your sky.

Doing brings peace and joy. Brave action and corroding unhappiness cannot walk the same road. Action—I use it broadly still—will untie the most tangled knot of life. Nothing is impossible when the day is fully come and we have risen to our tasks; but the darkest hours in any life are those hours before the dawn when we lie and brood and fear, and the pallid light of our chambers is populous with spectres. God be praised for the brave, clear, light of any morning of daring and obedience which calls us away from our fear-haunted shadows into the glowing comradeships of love and duty.

Action vitalizes truth. The greatest thing in our world of human wonder is the power of men to become soldiers of the living Word, and march out incarnate armies of the prophets, the dreamers, the idealists,—aye, of the Son of God.

## DOERS OF THE WORD

There is no deed which was not first a living word. Sometimes words go marching out as armies; sometimes they cross the sea, bearing the seeds of a new civilization; sometimes they build cities; and always they build lives. Sometimes they are emblazoned banners and sometimes they are tempered steel; sometimes they are the policies of nations and sometimes they are the towers of time-worn cathedrals, seen far against the sky.

We are this morning, every one of us, in what is best and bravest in our own lives, living words. We are the words of mothers and teachers, lovers and saints, scholars, statesmen or dreamers; our deeds are the children of those who have spoken to us—forgotten words are reborn in what we do; the words of the dead live again in our lives.

We always possess what we have done; no one can take it away from us. What I have learned I may forget; but what I have done I do not need even to try to remember. It is mine—because it is me. So we are introducing more and more the laboratory method into education; we want our children to do the things they are taught; once done, they lie no longer upon the surface of their lives, to be blown away by any passing wind or erased by the touch of time. Once done, they are wrought into the very structure of their selfhood, and when occasion arises they will do them again; not by any trick of memory but by the sure magic of creative force.

Doing reveals us to ourselves. We never truly know what we are until we bring ourselves into action. Here is the clear meaning of the apostle's figure—a figure which I have read a hundred times and did not understand till yesterday. "For if any be a hearer of the Word," he says, "and not a doer of the Word, he is like



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

unto a man beholding his natural face in the glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

What, after all, have our mirrors to tell us about ourselves save the fleeting and the superficial? The self which we see in the mirror is not the self which we really know. The shadowy reflection has nothing to tell us of laughter and tears, of love and yearning, of wonder and pity. Have you never seen yourself for an instant as you go down the street — yourself reflected in some shop window mirror, lost as soon as seen — and have you never been moved by a sense of strange wonder, as if the one whom you saw was unknown to you as the stranger by your side? No; the mirror reflects nothing but life's fleeting externalities. It is not by looking at ourselves in the glass that we know our weaknesses, or sound the possible depths of our strength; but rather as we essay great tasks and face flaming opportunities, and bear heavy burdens, and live and love and suffer and rejoice.

It is by such stairs as these that we reach the great spiritual realities. It is by the want of action, noble and fruitful, that we pass through self-deceit and numbing powerlessness and sterile detachment from actuality down into those empty futilities of life in which character is dissolved and our very souls fall apart like a garment fretted by moths. And I wonder if the judgment day has any more pitiless revelation than this uncovering of a life without texture or power whose deepening detachments from the actual have detached it from God Himself — a life for which heaven has no place and the nether darkness no hospitality. It will be better in that day to have been Kipling's "Gentlemen Adventurers"; "fettered wrist to bar all for red iniquity," for in the



## DOERS OF THE WORD

very positiveness of their fault there is a strangely shadowed hope, than to bring to God's judgment bar the dusty emptiness of a soul which never did the good it might have done—or sinned the sins of which it darkly dreamed.

“ And Tomlinson took up his tale and spoke of his good in life,  
This I have read in a book, he said, and that was told to me.  
And this I have thought that another man thought of a Prince in Muscovy.

The good souls flocked like homing doves and bade him clear the path,  
And Peter twirled the jangling keys in weariness and wrath.

‘ Ye have read, ye have heard, ye have thought,’ he said, ‘ and the tale is yet to run;

By the worth of the body that once ye had, give answer — what ha’ ye done?’

‘ Ye have read, ye have felt, ye have guessed, good lack! Ye have hampered Heaven’s Gate;

There’s little room between the stars in idleness to prate.

O none may reach by hired speech of neighbor, priest and kin,

Through borrowed deed to God’s good meed that lies so fair within.’ ”

Well, there is need everywhere that we should be doers of the Word and not hearers only, but there is supreme need of it in the Church. For too many of us religion, and all that it stands for, lies far too much in that region of the soul where obedience is too often doubtful or uncertain, and sometimes sadly wanting. The very greatness of the theme with which we deal makes obedience difficult; we are not dealing with questions of profit and loss, but with eternal values; not with the concerns of a day, but with the enduring interests of a lifetime. It is not easy to be doers of the Word, in this great sense. To address oneself bravely and patiently to the making of a character, and the redemption of a world, to carry out to life’s furthest frontiers the teachings of the Spirit,—to make idealisms and consecrations manifest, always and everywhere, is the hardest thing in life, just as it is the whole of life.

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

And so, without really meaning that it should be so, we deceive ourselves, thinking that we obey, when we have not even begun to obey. The preacher forgets that his sermon can have neither meaning nor justification, if it be not a clear call to the transformation of life. He thinks of it as an end in itself, caresses its phrases, embroiders its sentences, and having delivered it, asks only that people shall speak well of it. Those who hear criticise its deficiencies, or warm themselves in its glowing periods, and think that they have done their duty by it all when they tell the preacher that they have enjoyed his discourse. And meanwhile we are dealing with truth which has no meaning at all if it does not re-make our lives and our world. A Lyddite shell is a harmless thing compared with the explosive power of Christian truth; there is dynamite enough in every word of Jesus Christ to blow our world of unbrotherliness to pieces; there is transforming power enough in every sentence of his, to answer all our hopes. We are always sailing about like the aviators of whom we read, dropping bombs which do not explode, because, if I may venture to use the figure, the fuse of obedience is unlighted. Nay, — and this is a better figure, — we are always making brave proclamations of a better world which is strangely slow in coming, because we do not go out to answer our own proclamations, or set up the empire which we seek first of all in our obedient souls.

And now to end with ever so briefly, how shall we begin to be doers of the Word? Simply, in a sentence, by bringing our wills into action, at the most immediate point of contact, between life and duty. Somewhere along the frontier of each life here this morning there is a place where some unfulfilled duty presses squarely up against a reluctant will — a region where we need no

## DOERS OF THE WORD

further instruction, where nothing is in debate. And from that point the benumbing power of disobedience spreads itself through the whole of life. Begin there; and begin there now. I do not know what it is, nor why it is, that you have hesitated so long — each one of us must answer that for himself. Nor do I think, when we have stripped the conduct of life down to bedrock, that there is any way of beginning, except in sheer exercise of wills which have not been put into action.

It is ourselves, and our duty, and our will; and though the help of God may come to us through a thousand channels, there is one thing that even God Himself cannot do — He cannot put our wills into action if we ourselves will not begin to act. We do not need to go more than one step at a time; we are not responsible for the full triumph of the campaign upon which we enter, and above all, we are not alone. But it is ours to begin. Then step by step we shall find the way open, duty by duty we shall establish the empire of an holy will; obedience by obedience tides of power will come in to reinforce us; joy and peace and faith and strength will fall into step with us as we march along; in the end we shall find ourselves no longer soldiers of a losing cause, but a part of the conquering army of the Omnipotent God.

In her marvelous preparation for the tragic exercise of war, Germany had arranged every detail of the mobilization of her armies; every railroad and every train on every road had its war schedule; the command to mobilize substituted the schedule of war for the schedule of peace — new timings, new destinations, new duties. For every engineer and guard on the road, the war schedule began at the first stop on the road where the news was proclaimed. Meanwhile every soldier in the

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

Empire, halted in his customary occupations, dropping his tool at the bench, leaving his plow in the furrow, was making his way to his appointed station. And so a million men were gathered together, clothed and armed, and sent down the red road of the strife of the nations, in answer to a single word.

Suppose we mobilized like that, in answer to the word of the Prince of Peace — suppose the great duties of love and brotherhood became immediately operative, halting us in our indecisions, our lethargies, our fears; facing us toward new obediences and calling us down roads of service which begin at our very feet, to the fields of the battle of peace, to the heights of duty and love. How soon and how splendidly would not our world be remade!

How shall the better day ever come if force and death obey the slightest word of a dominant will, while love and goodness are powerless through our inaction and hesitations? O God, hasten the day when the soldiers of Jesus Christ shall meet His life-giving words with a majestic obedience in which our dreams shall come true and great causes be established! And God help us to answer that prayer!

## XIV

### WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

*"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat in it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. . . . And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." — Revelation 20 : 11, 12.*

There are two wonders in life — our entrance, and our departure. The wonder of birth and growth is somewhat dimmed by our partial familiarity with their laws, and still more by the slow unfolding of the conscious self; consciousness does not break upon us in mid-day glory but rises like the dawn. And even so, we are hardly come before we are summoned to depart. Here the final wonder of life confronts us with a force which nothing can soften. We are, and then in a moment we are not, and in our going we pass through a door so jealously guarded that not a whisper comes back from those who cross its thresholds. Generations seem hardly more than wintry snow-flakes falling upon the sea — they fill the air with their drifting movements, then touch the water and are forever lost. Those who leave us are dear to us and life is empty without them, and many things are lost in their going; and so we ask into what country they have taken their journey and into what state they are come, and, if death be the end of life, then what is death and, since there is but one final account to be given of all men everywhere and always — then where are the dead?

There are but three answers to this question, three inclusive answers, I mean. The first is the answer of sheer materialism — they are in the dust beneath our

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

feet. Life, the materialist tells us, is nothing more than the by-product of the complex organization of matter. He does not pretend to know what matter is, but he believes that when matter has reached a certain level of organization it begins to quicken in the simplest forms of cellular life and that as it mounts from level to level it sways in the grasses, blossoms in the flowers, flies in the birds, grows strong in the lion and swift in the deer, and finally in its most delicate and intricate forms of organization comes to consciousness in the human brain, and that thereafter all that men are and do is but the manifold expression of an organization of matter so complex that we cannot untangle its complexities, maintained with great difficulty at the very highest levels, and always after a little while yielding to the forces which strive to undo it.

When the organization is undone, what is begotten of the organization dissolves like the baseless fabric of a vision. Something has failed in the physical mechanism, and thereafter consciousness is as if it had never been; what was bright and beautiful, strong and creative has vanished out of the world as a note of music when the violin is muted, or as an organ tone when the air within the pipes has ceased to vibrate. Then the dust returns to its dust, but no spirit to the God who gave it, for there is no spirit to return. If this be true, the earth is a vast sepulchre and all we tread upon the dust of vanished forms, and there is but one answer to all our longings and questionings and protestings — when the machine has done its work it is sent back to the scrap-heap, and we are but idle dreamers if we ask or hope for ourselves another fate.

Now there is a certain measure of truth in all this way of thinking about death. Our great Mother-earth does

## WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

take back into her bosom all that she gave to begin with and through her kind alchemy undoes it all to build it up again — like Penelope of old, raveling in the darkness what she wove in the light. But I, for my part, cannot accept this answer to our age-old question; it is far too simple. There are elements in life which have no common fortune with the dust. When James Russell Lowell sings of Abraham Lincoln,

“For him her Old-World moulds aside she threw,  
And, choosing sweet clay from the breast  
Of the exhausted West,  
With stuff untainted shaped a hero new,”

his song is something more than a fine poetic figure. Abraham Lincoln is the child of the soil from which he sprang. But no sepulchre which men have ever built can contain him; nay, should the whole earth become his tomb and be set apart to no other service, he would still be greater than his sepulchre; the dust of a world would not weigh in the balance against the great qualities of his soul. No, it is not enough to say that the dead are in the dust beneath our feet. The house of clay in which they lived is there, but personality is not there nor high spiritual passion nor what men have dreamed and done. You cannot bury on any battle-field the qualities of courage and sacrifice which the battle-field has evoked. The high spirit of the Englishmen who held their thin red line before the charge of the Imperial Guard on the field of Waterloo is not buried in the mound which the Lion of Waterloo guards. What was fine and flaming in the militant passion of Napoleonic France does not lie forever hidden in the soil over which the wounded Eagle which commemorates the dauntlessness of the French now broods. Nor is St. Paul forgotten in a tomb somewhere outside the gates



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

of Rome, nor is John Huss beneath the stone which marks his resting place, nor is Jesus Christ in that new-laid sepulchre wherein none had ever lain, — outside the walls of Jerusalem.

There is therefore a second answer to the question — where are the dead? And it is this: they live in the continuing generations and are made enduring in the influences which they exert. There is, say those who make this answer, a kind of corporate immortality. Men and women are not grains of sand, each separate, complete and lonely in himself. The life of the generations is so interwoven that we cannot undo the fabric. Fathers live again in their sons, mothers in their daughters, and the dead in the living. Each one of us makes some bequest, establishes some little part of himself in this corporate human life, and then, although he passes out into silence, what he has been and done abides. So love lives in all those whom love has blessed; so the teacher lives in his scholars; and the musician in his song; the artist in those who rejoice in his vision of beauty; and the scholar in those who have been instructed in his efforts for truth; the saint lives in the impulses for sanctity which he communicates to the world; the statesman lives in his fatherland and the soldier in the causes for which he died.

Now there is no denying the significance of this answer. There is much in it which may well hearten us all. When we contemplate the enduringness of the wise and the great, and remember how though Socrates drank the hemlock he has been alive for two thousand years, and how Plato still discourses loftily and Homer sings, and Isaiah thunders, and Moses legislates, and St. Paul meditates upon grave themes or breaks out into spiritual rhapsodies, and how those whose very names are for-

## WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

gotten still live in the well-being of humanity and are remembered though unknown — when we consider this I say — it is enough to hold all of us bravely to our task, and to console us for the all too brief ending of life. For humanity, after all, is a great fellowship and the generations are one, and we who live not in ourselves but in our human world are at least as enduring as humanity itself, and share the fortunes of that which is vaster than ourselves.

And yet this answer does not satisfy us, for it does not deal fairly with personality itself. It is much to save influence — it would be infinitely much more to save the sources of influence. The immortality of influence is a pallid and doubtful immortality. It is something to live in memory, but after all, this is only a partial life, possessing neither substance nor rich continuing force, nor does this answer meet the deeper needs of the heart. Our lack of satisfaction with any answer to the question of the ages which assumes the annihilation of personality is not conceit nor selfishness, it is deeper than that. We protest instinctively against the waste of it all, and the tragic brevity of it all, and the sundering of relationships, and the untimely ending of what never should have been begun if death is to be the end. The real worth of life is not in the broken influences which outlast us but in the rich and glowing content of personality itself, in love and fellowship and the knitting of soul to soul, and whatever does not save that is unspeakably wasteful. More than this, such a corporate immortality as the immortality of influence implies is all too pathetically brief. Our world is a dying world, though it may endure for countless generations; our sun is a dying sun, though it may shine for eons yet. The stored forces of the world are being scattered, never

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

to be gathered together again. Some day a dead world will drift about a darkening sun and the last monument to human habitation be lost in chaos. Nothing will be left of humanity, not even undecipherable records. What then becomes of the immortality of influence? It is something, but it is not enough.

There is a third answer to the question and that is the text of the morning: "The dead are with God." It is highly significant that the last great vision in the last book of the Bible leaves the dead, great and small, in the power of God. The apostle sees a throne before which all else is fled, and on that throne a just and loving power, and gathered there all those who have passed beyond the shadows—and that is all. Heaven and earth are done, there is nothing left save God and the spirits of men. When we are done with all our speculating we may rest in this third great answer which is the answer of faith, "The dead are with God." For our belief in immortality is after all a supreme act of faith. Immortality does not submit itself to demonstration nor can logic build any roads by which we may find our way into that undiscovered country, but there are certain governing conclusions in life which are reached neither by experience nor demonstration; they are simply demanded by all the deeper needs of life, and without them we are put not only to permanent intellectual but permanent spiritual confusion. Immortality is such a conclusion. There are great cumulative grounds for its acceptance. Without it the greatest problems of life are left unsolved, the greatest needs of the soul are left unmet. Our faith in immortality is involved in the other great confidences of life, and supremely it is dependent upon our confidence in God.

If God is but a strain of tendency or another way of

## WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

thinking about the sum total of the forces and realities of the universe, immortality may be true or it may not; there is nothing in the thought of such a God as that to guarantee it. But, if God is loving good-will and wisdom, conscious, supreme, unresting — then, whatever life needs for its completion lies easily within His power. He will do whatever is just and assure to us whatever is right. He holds the perfect circle in His infinite vision, we see but the broken round. We may trust ourselves to Him in life, and we may trust ourselves, and those whom we have loved, to Him in death. He will not permit love to be cheated nor justice to be mocked, nor will He allow what has cost so much and has been won through such travail, and what is rich in such possibilities — human personality, to be poured out as water on the dry land, and so forever lost. Reverence and reason, faith and experience can make no other answer to the question of the ages than this — the dead are perforce with God, and He will deal with them justly and lovingly as part of the triumphant process of a just and loving will.

If the dead are in the hands of God, then they are in the keeping of a power great enough to overcome all the difficulties which any faith in immortality is called upon to meet. It is idle to underestimate, or to belittle these difficulties. We have no experience of personality except in bodily form. We cannot even imagine disembodied personality. We cannot localize the spiritual. When the body is silent, still and cold, imagination is touched as by the chill of death itself, and faith does but "falter where it firmly trod." Yet when we measure what immortality demands against what the power of God has already accomplished, we have no reason to doubt His power to keep that which He has created against even

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

death itself. The road which life has travelled since its first far-off faint beginnings to its full expression in personality is a vastly more difficult and seemingly impossible road than the road which personality, once secured and matured, would need to travel to rise above the shock and change of death. There was a time when this world of ours was but a mist of fire, swinging in its new-found orbit around its mother sun. There was another time when the mist of fire had become a flattened sphere and prophetic crusts, germs of continents still to be, began to form upon its molten mass. Suppose that then, standing upon the first crust which would bear the weight of a human foot, with a comrade to whom all the history of the globe was as yet a book unopened, some seer speaking out of a God-given vision of the world to be had said, "this still molten mass will cool itself and hollow its surfaces into chambers where the seas shall be gathered together, and lift itself into great mountain ranges, and spread itself abroad in plains; seas of an eonian future will become rich with innumerable forms of life, the plains will clothe themselves with verdure as with a garment, solemn forests will mantle the flanks of the hills, the air will become vocal with singing birds, the jungles mysterious with teeming forms of life. The very crust beneath our feet will bloom in color and grow rich with perfume, and in the fulness of time man, last birth of this womb of fire, shall walk erect upon it and battle his way up long ascents, build his cities, sing his songs, dream his dreams, measure the pulsations of light, retell the story of the past, share hate with the brute and love with God, build his temples of prayer and worship, meditate upon his fate — and refuse to believe himself wholly kin to the dust from which he has sprung."

## WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

I think the prophet's comrade would have said to him — "This is impossible, there is absolutely no indication here of what you anticipate. I can conceive of no possible connection between such a world as we now look upon and the world which you describe." And yet, what I have been trying to say is simply a record of what has really happened. Cannot a God who has already done so much as this do the one last thing needed to crown His work with love? We may leave our dead in the power of God; He is strong enough to keep them still as His own.

We may leave our dead in the love of God. There are a thousand questions a lonely heart will ask — there is but one answer — they are with God.

Oh, we have built our heavens of desires and our hells of fears, and our worlds of pallid shades. We have invested the future with unspeakable terror, or clothed it with cloudless light, we have erected our cities four-square with their streets of gold, we have spread abroad the glory of the eternal day upon the hills and meadows of the land of pure delight. All this is natural enough but it is all beside the mark. We need only to ask that an infinite love, a love which has lain about life like light from the very beginning, unfailing, patient, tender, unspeakably compassionate, should wait behind the veil to receive those whom God calls and we dismiss. Whatever life really needs, God's love will secure. We may rest in that. If we need cities and fields and mountains, we shall find them in the Land of Pure Delight; if we need healing and comfort, we shall find that there; if we need nurture and new opportunity, we shall find that there,—occupations, relationships, hopes and purposes — all that life needs to be life. I would not build walls of gold or ivory for the final habitation of my dead, nor



## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

imagine celestial scenes, nor try to picture where and how they are—I would seek rather for them an unbroken and unbreakable relationship with the love and power of God, and leave them there blessed and secure.

They are always in the keeping of the justice of God. I do not believe that the life hereafter is to be a morally colorless life. I cannot think of punishment, vindictive and unrelenting, as any part at all of the divine purpose—all that is a travesty on God, a misunderstanding of the heart of the eternal. But no man can think of the eternal order as an order where no account is taken of the ways in which we have wounded and misused our lives and the lives of others. I think it will go hard with selfishness when the dead stand before God. There are cleansing fires compared with which the fires of Dante's vision are cold as ice. Will it be nothing when we find ourselves in the great white light of truth and justice, face to face for the first time with eternal realities, seen without a shadow? Will it be nothing when with unclouded sight we see the far-flung consequences of what we have been and done, and the rare beauty of what we have missed? Then we shall be cut back to whatever is worth keeping, in an order where the only values are spiritual, and the things of sense are discarded as outgrown garments.

Some of us who have seemed to ourselves, and even to our neighbors, to stand high in the present world, will find so little left of us that we shall need the infinitely discerning love of God to find in our distorted souls even the germs of what will endure a happier replanting, and some of us who have here been forgotten and for whom such a world as ours has had little use, will stand among the great and strong when life is tested by its fitness for spiritual relationships. Justice does not pun-



## WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

ish but justice corrects, and correction is never easy and rarely painless. If the dead are with God, then His correcting, purging power will have its way with them. Whether this means universal restoration no man would dare to say; it may be that the most proud and wilful of us may possess within ourselves such power of resistance to the correcting love of God as to make eternity a long exile from the reality of His presence and His joy. I do not know—but I do know that wherever there shall be in any soul here or hereafter any longing after better things, or any stirring of repentance, or any reaching out of will or desire, no matter how faint or hesitant, toward love and light and goodness, that then either here or hereafter, now or in eternity, the saving love of God will flow out to meet that soul even before its better impulses have become conscious to itself and then and there, as here and now, the power of God will be pledged to our redemption.

The dead are in the keeping of a God of infinite resource. His work is never done. Is it too much to believe that as He has begun His creative work in the region of the temporal, He will complete it in the relationships of the eternal? Can you think of an infinitely wise and loving power resting content with a world like ours, or permitting Himself to be judged by the injustices and inequalities and tragic failures and imperfect triumphs of our unfinished human life? George Frederick Watts spent the last five years of his life shaping one heroic figure through which he sought to express his conception of Physical Energy. Morning after morning the noise of his sculptor's mallet roused his household and when they looked out in the gray dawn there was the old man at his task striving to shape in marble the mighty vision which thrilled his

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

soul. When death stayed his hand the work was still unfinished—but he sought to finish it. Do you think that God would do less than Watts? For ten years Augustus St. Gaudens wrought at the statue of Phillips Brooks, which you may pass any morning in the shadow of Trinity Church—when death stayed his hand he left it so confessedly incomplete that both the friends of St. Gaudens and Phillips Brooks wish it had never been cast,—but he sought to finish it. Will God do less than Augustus St. Gaudens? Schubert's unfinished symphony still haunts us with its many suggestions of what it might have been, and vibrates with the musician's passion beating against the bars of time and fate—but he sought to finish it. Will God do less than Schubert? The whole of Michelangelo's life is but the story of the battle of his transcendent genius against conditions which were always so defeating him that what he left us is only the broken torso of what he might have done—and yet he struggled on. Will God do less than Michelangelo? For life as it now is, in the individual or the race, is but an unfinished symphony, a design sketched but not completed, a prophecy pathetically unfulfilled. Can death defeat God? I will not believe it. The dead, small and great, are with Him. He will finish His work.

Little children are in His keeping, He will perfect the bright promise of their lives, they will grow in the love-lit fields of His unfailing care as they would never have grown in our misty, shadowed earth life. The young and the strong are with Him—here we think of them as columns overthrown—there they will be built as pillars in the Temple of our God. The wise and mature are with Him—here they left us when we had most need of them—there they will add weight to the

## WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

deliberations of heavenly councils. The sorrowing are with Him—they will pluck the flowers of comfort from heavenly fields. The lonely are with Him—they walk in radiant comradeship. The maimed and bruised and broken are with Him—He will make them whole again. The thwarted and defeated are with Him—they will take up their work anew and perfect it in radiant tutelage.

Michelangelo will paint his Last Judgment anew, no longer sad and disillusioned, but dipping his brush in the colors of an unclouded spiritual vision. Schubert will finish his unfinished symphony and attune it to celestial choirings. George Frederick Watts will baptize his rare and shining genius in an infinite power. Those who never had a chance will see the doors of opportunity open as on golden hinges. The victims of the injustices of time will quiet their embittered souls in the Divine integrity. The great will be greater still, and the saints grow rich in deepened sanctity. Do you say this is a dream? Aye, it is a dream, but it is a dream into which the very justice of God and His power to complete what He had begun and the whole weight of the Christian revelation are so inextricably interwoven that if the dream fails His love and justice will fail. If this is only a dream, God is only a dream and the world the vast caprice of a mocking power. There are some dreams upon which a man will venture all—I will venture all upon a dream like this.

If the dead are with God they are with the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom life and immortality were brought to light. All that men hoped or dreamed of deathlessness, all their gropings through the shadows, all the conclusions of the philosopher or the lyric assurances of the poet have become real and definite and glowing in the risen life of Jesus Christ. It has been

## THE GODWARD SIDE OF LIFE

easy to believe in immortality since he conquered death. There are certain substances which, put into a chemical solution, will crystallize its unstable forms and give them thereafter a perpetual solidity. So Jesus Christ with his cloudless confidence in immortality and his demonstration of the power of it in his own life, coming into a world where men had hoped and speculated, but where they never dared be certain, has crystallized our faith; hereafter it has the solidity of his divine revelation.

And I, for my part, rest securely, not on what is incidental in Jesus' demonstration of immortality, but what is central in his revelation; not alone upon the recorded incidents of the Resurrection, but upon the massive necessity of it. Here was one so open to the Father's will, so divinely rich in his experience of God and so perfectly one with the divine nature that he was the divine nature made incarnate, and who by virtue of his perfect identification with God was not able as his apostle says, "to be holden with the dead." The empty tomb of the Resurrection morning demonstrates that where life is lived in faith and devotion and unity with God, then it is always eternal. Yes, the dead are with God, and we may leave them there, confident, unafraid. Heaven and earth may flee away but the throne of His love and wisdom and power is unshaken, and when all else is dissolved there shall be left of all the travail of this world of ours, not its cities, nor its wealth, nor its monuments, nor even its seas and its mountains, but only those who have made it for a little while their temporal habitation, and who were called through gates of shadow into lands of light. Only those, I say, and their Father, God — personality with personality, soul with soul in the bonds of an endless life.









